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ABSTRACT

A study examined the outcomes attained by 389 indigenous students who completed programs at the 4 largest Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges in the 9-member Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP). The survey, which elicited a 57% response rate, established that, although a very large percentage of the students surveyed had the most severely disadvantaged backgrounds, their educational outcomes were higher than the outcomes attained by indigenous peoples in the vocational education and training (VET) sector overall. The students' employment rate rose from less than 20% before completion of their course to 36% afterward, and an additional 13% of students obtained new paid employment or self-employment after completion of their course. Of the students surveyed, approximately one-third continued their study within the sector after completing their course, another 24% undertook further education and training elsewhere, 21% credited their educational experience with helping them sort out their lives, and more than 36% credited their course with increasing their confidence. (The report contains 33 references and 51 tables. Appended are the following: VET courses and programs offered by the FIAEP in 1997, selected Australian vocational education and training statistics, official definitions of employment-related terms, and survey questionnaire.) (MN)

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Succeeding against the odds

The outcomes attained by Indigenous students in Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges

Deborah Durnan

Bob Boughton

NCVER

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Succeeding against the odds

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Foreword

The report *Succeeding against the odds* quantifies for the first time the outcomes being achieved by Indigenous students in accredited vocational education and training (VET) programs provided by independent Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges.

The study shows that the educational outcomes being achieved by Indigenous students in this sector were better than those being achieved by Indigenous students in the VET sector as a whole. This is despite the fact that students in this sector have experienced much more severe educational and social disadvantage than Indigenous VET students as a whole.

In particular, the pass rates being achieved by students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges were much higher than those being achieved by Indigenous students in the VET sector as a whole. Amazingly, they also marginally exceeded the pass rates for the VET sector nationally. Some 62 per cent of module enrolments in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges resulted in a pass, compared with only 45 per cent for Indigenous students in the VET sector as a whole and a national crude module pass rate for all VET students of just under 60 per cent. It should be noted these measures of student performance differ from those used to gauge the system's performance.

This is a truly remarkable result, which can be attributed to the extra support provided to Indigenous students in VET programs provided by independent Aboriginal community-controlled institutions. These colleges provide a unique learning environment which is conducive to the retention and success of Indigenous students in their VET programs, even if they have to overcome enormous hurdles to succeed. The high pass rates also reflect the much higher withdrawal rates in the independent sector. Students in this sector withdrew from their courses at more than double the rate of Indigenous students in the rest of the VET sector.

The study also shows that, overall, reasonable employment outcomes are being attained in this sector, given the high incidence of students coming from rural and remote locations and the level of educational and social disadvantage. However, the employment outcomes in terms of paid employment are lower than for Indigenous Technical and Further Education (TAFE) graduates and for all TAFE graduates. This report also documents the significant extent of other possible outcomes being attained by students in the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

The analysis in this report highlights the importance of the independent sector as a training ground for Indigenous people working in Aboriginal communities or in Indigenous organisations. Public investment in this sector is leading to positive outcomes for the Indigenous students.

This study was jointly sponsored by the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP) and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The research project and survey design were negotiated between the parties, and the project was managed by the directors of the FIAEP institutions. The survey fieldwork was carried out by a largely Indigenous team, with all members of the team being known to and trusted by the students being interviewed. The privacy of the Indigenous students who agreed to participate in the study has been maintained. This study represents a best-practice approach to research about Indigenous peoples which ought to be followed wherever non-Indigenous organisations are involved in an Indigenous research project.

We would like to thank the report's authors, Deborah Durnan (Institute for Aboriginal Development [IAD]) and Bob Boughton (Menzies School of Health Research); Anne Every, the project's research assistant; and the interview team, Lisa Connor, Julie Doyle, Shirley Erlandson, Don Hayward, Kayleen O'Loughlin, Cos Russo, Peter Sevellos, Carol Speechley and Les Wanganeen. The statistical consultant to the project was Brian Harvey of NCVER. The project's management was the responsibility of the directors of FIAEP, Jack Beetson (Tranby), Donna Ah Chee (IAD), Bill Wilson (Tauondi) and Jon Alderman and Robert Jackson (National Aboriginal & Islander Skills Development Association [NAISDA]). The study was advised by a steering committee, comprised of Lionel Bamblett (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. [VAEAI]), Bob Boughton, Deborah Maidment (Deputy Director, IAD) and Chris Robinson (Managing Director, NCVER).

Jack Beetson
Chair, FIAEP

Chris Robinson
Managing Director, NCVER

Contents

Foreword *iii*

List of tables *vii*

Executive summary *ix*

1 Introduction *1*

2 The Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector: History and current status *3*

3 Profiles of the colleges participating in the survey *6*

3.1 Tranby College

3.2 National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association, College of Dance

3.3 Tauondi Inc.

3.4 Institute for Aboriginal Development

4 Project methodology *9*

4.1 Project design and management

4.2 Ethical issues

4.3 Survey size and response rate

5 Characteristics of the student population *12*

5.1 Aboriginality

5.2 Gender

5.3 Age

5.4 Identity and language

5.5 Previous educational history

5.6 Family situation

5.7 Social issues

5.8 Employment history

6 The learning experiences of students enrolled in 1997 *21*

6.1 Course types and levels

6.2 Course length, mode and delivery

6.3 Choice of course

6.4 Aboriginal involvement in course delivery

6.5 Academic support

6.6 Other support services

6.7 Facilities

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6.8 Student satisfaction
6.9 Employment during course
6.10 Other financial support

7 The outcomes attained by students *30*

7.1 Attendance
7.2 Education outcomes
7.3 Employment and other positive outcomes
7.4 Further study, with or without work
7.5 Student evaluations of the sector

8 Conclusion *42*

9 Notes *44*

10 References *46*

Appendices

1 VET courses and programs offered in 1997 by the FIAEP *51*
2 Selected Australian vocational education and training statistics, Indigenous students and all students, 1997 *53*
3 Official definitions of employment, unemployment and labour force participation *57*
4 Survey questionnaire *63*

List of tables

Table 1: Students by gender *13*
Table 2: Students by age cohort, independent sector and national *13*
Table 3: Identification with clan, tribal or language group *14*
Table 4: Aboriginal language spoken *14*
Table 5: Main language used at home *14*
Table 6: Highest year of schooling attained *10*
Table 7: Number of courses completed before 1997 *10*
Table 8: Highest pre-1997 qualification *10*
Table 9: Family status *17*
Table 10: Caring for children *17*
Table 11: Selected social problems and issues affecting students *10*
Table 12: Recent employment history *20*
Table 13: Previous employment by employer type *20*
Table 14: Course level *21*
Table 15: Length of course *22*
Table 16: Delivery modes *22*
Table 17: Delivery sites *23*
Table 18: Workplace and community components *23*
Table 19: Field trips *23*
Table 20: Recognition of prior learning *24*
Table 21: Studying home and away *24*
Table 22: Reasons students chose their course *25*
Table 23: Aboriginal involvement in course delivery *25*
Table 24: Academic support for students *20*
Table 25: Other types of support *27*
Table 26: Student satisfaction with course choice *28*
Table 27: Employment during course *28*
Table 28: Employer type for those employed during the course *28*
Table 29: Means of financial support during studies *20*
Table 30: Self-rated attendance *30*
Table 31: Reasons for non-attendance *31*
Table 32: Education outcomes *32*
Table 33: Education outcomes, the surveyed students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges, all Indigenous VET students and all VET students, 1997 (per cent) *32*
Table 34: Module completion rates by alcohol and other drug abuse (per cent) *34*

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Table 35: Employment outcomes, broadly defined 35
Table 36: Other course outcomes 36
Table 37: Type of employment obtained at the end of studying 36
Table 38: Non-CDEP post-study employment obtained by employer category 37
Table 39: Difficulties finding work 38
Table 40: Work and study outcomes 39
Table 41: Students wanting to do further study 39
Table 42: Obstacles to undertaking further study 40
Table 43: Student evaluation of courses in terms of goals 41
Table 44: General evaluation of the educational experience 41
Table 45: Gender (number of students) 53
Table 46: Age 53
Table 47: Highest year of school 53
Table 48: Qualifications completed before 1997 54
Table 49: Geographic regions 54
Table 50: Field of study 55
Table 51: Qualification category 50

Executive summary

This report presents the results of the first comprehensive quantitative study of the outcomes achieved by Indigenous people enrolling in vocational education and training (VET) courses in colleges within the Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector.

Over the past 40 years an independent Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector has been developing in Australia. Colleges within this sector were established especially to meet the education and training aspirations of Indigenous people who had not had adequate access to appropriate schooling and basic education when they were younger. In recent years the focus has shifted more and more to the provision of especially designed formal and accredited VET programs, many with a particular focus on training people for effective participation in Indigenous community organisations.

A recently released report, *Making a difference: The impact of Australia's Indigenous education and training policy* (Robinson & Bamblett 1998), shows that there has been major progress in Indigenous education over the past decade. This report, *Succeeding against the odds*, shows just what a valuable contribution the Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector has been making to the improvement in Indigenous education and training.

The study reports the results of a survey of the outcomes achieved by 389 students who completed programs in Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges in 1997. The largest four colleges of the nine-member Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP) participated and a response rate of 57 per cent was achieved.

The results are broadly representative of the sector as the four colleges participating in the study comprised over 80 per cent of the total 1997 enrolments in accredited programs in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges.

The study was managed by the FIAEP and took place from April 1998 to March 1999. It was jointly sponsored by the FIAEP and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Independent Aboriginal community-controlled colleges have attracted Indigenous students from a diversity of backgrounds, ages, locations (especially from rural and remote areas), languages and cultures. The VET courses the respondents enrolled in ranged from the most basic level of VET

provision through to the most advanced VET courses, with a significantly higher proportion studying at professional and para-professional levels than is the case for Indigenous students in the rest of the VET sector.

Several significant findings emerge from this study that have been quantified for the first time.

First, a very large proportion of the students enrolled in independent colleges come from the most severely disadvantaged of backgrounds, especially in relation to having had little or no adequate prior educational experiences, but also in relation to significant social indicators such as having had inordinately high levels of unemployment, ill health and contact with the law and the justice system. For example, 20 per cent of the respondents reported a background of serious alcohol abuse and 15 per cent reported other forms of drug abuse (not including tobacco). An extraordinary 46 per cent of students had not completed Year 10 secondary schooling (compared with only 28 per cent of Indigenous students in the VET sector as a whole), and only one-third of students had experienced employment in the three years before 1997.

The second significant finding to emerge from this study is that, despite this degree of disadvantage among the students, their educational outcomes from the VET programs in 1997 were actually higher, in terms of pass rates, than Indigenous outcomes attained from the VET sector as a whole. What was most remarkable was that the pass rates in the independent Indigenous sector marginally exceeded the national pass rates for the VET sector as a whole. Some 62 per cent of module enrolments in the independent sector resulted in a pass, compared with 45 per cent for Indigenous module enrolments in the VET sector as a whole. This compares with some 60 per cent of all module enrolments in VET resulting in a pass. This truly remarkable result is thought to be due in part to the additional support and more accommodating environment provided for Indigenous students in Aboriginal community-controlled educational organisations. It should be noted that these measures of student performance differ from those used to gauge the system's performance.

Another important finding concerns the employment and other positive outcomes attained by students as a result of undertaking study in the Aboriginal community-controlled VET sector. Fewer than 20 per cent of students were employed while undertaking their course. The employment rate rose to 36 per cent in the follow-up study of their job status at least four months after completion of the course. Some 13 per cent of students had obtained a new paid job or were self-employed. A further 11 per cent had obtained employment under the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). Some 6 per cent worked in an unpaid capacity in community or cultural work. The remainder of the employed group, already in employment, reported either a promotion or better performance in their existing job as a result of their study. While these employment outcomes are not as high as those obtained by Indigenous students in more urbanised situations in the VET sector as a whole, they are nevertheless extremely encouraging given the student profiles found in independent Aboriginal community-controlled colleges.

The results of this study also confirm the importance of this sector as a training ground for employment in Aboriginal community organisations.

Just as important as the employment outcomes achieved were the other positive outcomes reported by the students enrolled in 1997. Around one-third of the respondents continued their study within the sector. Another 24 per cent undertook further education and training elsewhere. Some 21 per cent of respondents reported that their educational experience in an Aboriginal community-controlled college was the key factor in helping them to sort out their lives; nearly 15 per cent said it helped strengthen their Aboriginal identity; and over 36 per cent said the experience had made them more confident.

The results of this study provide quantitative evidence of the special and unique contribution that the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector makes to Indigenous people's vocational education and training in Australia. The study clearly demonstrates for the first time that the sector has produced very impressive outcomes for the Indigenous students choosing a VET course in an Indigenous community-controlled learning environment.

The educational outcomes being achieved are impressive when compared with those being achieved by Indigenous students in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions and other VET providers, despite the greater educational and social disadvantage faced by the bulk of the Indigenous student body in the independent Aboriginal sector. Their outcomes also rate highly when compared with the educational outcomes being achieved by all VET students in Australia.

While this study has not explored the resource inputs or public funding levels of independent Aboriginal community-controlled VET institutions, it does show that such expenditure is justifiable in terms of the outcomes being achieved.

1 Introduction

Nineteen ninety-eight marked the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the first independent Aboriginal adult education college in Australia, the Co-operative for Aborigines Ltd, better known as Tranby College, located in the inner Sydney suburb of Glebe, New South Wales. Two years previously, in February 1996, Tranby formally joined four other Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges to establish a national organisation, the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP). Since then, the five founding colleges, along with a growing number of new members, have embarked on a joint program of research designed to raise the sector's profile, and to document the contribution it makes both to national Aboriginal education goals and to the development aspirations of their own communities.

This report arises from the most recent of these projects, which was undertaken in 1998, jointly sponsored by the FIAEP and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The project involved a comprehensive survey of a large sample (n = 389) of the students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programs in this sector in 1997. This was the first *quantitative* study ever undertaken of the work of the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector, and so adds valuable information to previous studies, which have been more qualitative and policy-oriented (Ah Chee 1998; Boughton 1998; FIAEP 1997a, 1997b; Schwab 1996).

This report is written for teachers and managers in the sector itself, for policy advisors working on Indigenous VET within the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the State and Territory training authorities, and for the VET research community more generally. Most importantly the report is written for the Indigenous community and prospective Indigenous students to show how learning in an Aboriginal community-controlled college can and does lead to positive outcomes.

Some background information about the Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector and its current role within the national VET system is provided in the next section of this report. Each of the four participating colleges is then briefly profiled. Subsequent sections describe the project

methodology and present the detailed findings, along with some discussion, in the following areas:

- sample size
- student characteristics
- students' experiences at the colleges in terms of the courses they did, the other activities they were engaged in and the outcomes they achieved
- pathways they took in the year following their attendance at the colleges

The final section draws some conclusions, including policy implications and suggestions for further research.

2 The Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector: History and current status

The provision of education and training to Aboriginal adults by successive colonial administrations has a long and contradictory history in Australia, dating back to the first English Governor's efforts to provide instruction in English, agricultural work and the Christian religion to the people around the Sydney region.[1] For two centuries these educational interventions were most often allied with efforts to suppress the existing cultures, languages and economies of the people concerned, and to assimilate them to the roles designated for them in the settler economy as rural labourers and domestics. Until the middle of the twentieth century, education and training programs for Aboriginal adults remained largely under the control of the 'native' or 'welfare' administrations that operated in the individual States and Territories of the Commonwealth, or under the 'missions' of the various religious denominations which these administrations supported. From the 1950s and 1960s onwards, these segregated forms of education and training began to break down under pressure from Aboriginal people themselves, and from a civil rights movement in which they allied with trade unionists, progressive church organisations and human rights groups.

Tranby College, the first of the independent colleges, emerged from this civil rights movement, the creation of an alliance between Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, a radical Anglican clergyman, his Christian socialist colleagues, and sections of the trade union movement.[2] In 1958 Tranby began to provide classes in co-operative management and various technical and trade skills to assist Indigenous people to take control of their missions and settlements. A decade later, in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal people influenced by the growing civil rights movement in Australia and in the United States began working with another clergyman in education programs which led to the establishment of the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD). A few years later the Whitlam Labor Government, elected at the federal level in 1972, used new Commonwealth powers gained at a referendum in 1967 to expand support for many other independent community-controlled organisations that began to provide services such as legal aid, primary health care, advice on land rights, housing and education. By the end of the 1970s all the five founding members of the FIAEP had been established, and this independent sector has continued to grow, though more slowly, over the past two decades.

As a result, in part, of the pressure applied by the model of the independents, as well as by the civil rights movement which had spawned them, Australia's public vocational education and training sector, and a little

later the higher education sector, also began to expand their offerings to Indigenous people, from the 1970s and 1980s onwards. This process rapidly accelerated with the adoption by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth in 1989 of the National Aboriginal Education Policy (see Commonwealth of Australia 1989), which set equity targets for Indigenous participation in education at all levels, from preschool through primary and secondary to vocational and higher education, and provided direct Commonwealth subsidies to achieve these.[3]

One effect of this history is that the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector, to which can be attributed much of the impetus for reform in developing innovative education and training programs for Indigenous people in the 1960s and 1970s, found itself in the 1990s in increasing danger of being marginalised as the much larger TAFE and higher education institutions moved into their 'market'. Without the continuing strong support they receive from their own communities and from the Commonwealth, they might well have been absorbed into the State and Territory TAFE systems. This is despite the fact that the valuable work they do has been recognised and endorsed in reports and inquiries of government and in other research over a long period of time. However, the independents responded to these concerns, first by joining together as a national association (FIAEP) to advocate their sector and to undertake, sponsor and distribute research which identifies and evaluates the contribution they make to the Aboriginal community's education goals.[4] The second response of the independents was to go through a long and difficult process of realigning the provision of courses and developing new courses that are both formal and nationally accredited.

The courses provided by this sector in most cases began as non-accredited community education in areas such as literacy and numeracy, health and nutrition, living skills, co-operative management, and some basic trades such as baking and stock work. The colleges also often provided, and most still do, 'cross-cultural' education programs for non-Aboriginal people. Some developed particular specialisations early on, such as dance and drama education, or education and research in Aboriginal languages. In all cases the 'profile' of programs reflected the specific needs of the communities with which the colleges worked, and thus reflected the great diversity of needs and aspirations as well as historical and cultural experiences across Aboriginal Australia, from the most urbanised inner-city communities to the most isolated small rural outstations, and everywhere in between.

Today, the substantial offerings of the colleges are in formal and nationally accredited VET or higher education programs. As with all education and training providers in the community sector, the independent Aboriginal colleges were affected in major ways by the training reform agenda initiated by the Commonwealth in the mid-1980s, as well as by a decision of major funding agencies to restrict funding both for education and training programs and for student assistance and income support to *accredited courses* only. In the past decade the independent colleges have had to expand their offerings of this type of program, either by moving into new areas, or by rewriting and accrediting existing programs through the registration and accreditation processes which are now mandatory in VET.

It is important to note that, although this study is of the independents' VET-accredited programs, these by no means exhaust the range of their current offerings. By various means the sector has continued to provide non-accredited adult community education (ACE) courses, for which there is still a strong demand. They also provide programs for non-Indigenous people and organisations in cross-cultural awareness and Aboriginal languages. At IAD there are also on-campus higher education courses, provided in partnership with universities, and an internationally renowned language research program. Tranby and IAD have their own publishing and book distribution operations. One of the newer members, Booroongen Djugun College, specialises in aged-care training, and is associated with an Aboriginal people's aged-care facility. Some of the associate members of the FIAEP are independent community-controlled health services, which have become registered training organisations in order to be able to deliver their own Aboriginal health worker training courses.

Currently the member colleges of the FIAEP are:

- the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), Alice Springs, Northern Territory
- the National Aboriginal & Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA), the Rocks, New South Wales
- Tranby College, Glebe, New South Wales
- the Aboriginal Dance Theatre, Redfern, New South Wales
- Tauondi Inc., Port Adelaide, South Australia
- the Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Corporation for Health, Education & Training, Woolloongabba, Queensland
- the Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation, Emerton, New South Wales
- Booroongen Djugun College, Kempsey, New South Wales
- the Anyinginyi Congress Aboriginal Corporation, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory

The range of courses and programs that were available within the sector in 1997, the year to which the study relates, are set out in appendix 1.

3 Profiles of the colleges participating in the survey

Four member colleges of the FIAEP participated in the study—Tranby College and NAISDA, both in Sydney, Tauondi Inc. in Adelaide, and the IAD in Alice Springs.

3.1 Tranby College

Over its 40 years of existence, Tranby College has gone through many changes, to become a recognised national centre for Aboriginal economic, social and political development, drawing students from all around the country, including as far away as the Torres Strait. Alongside its educational programs it maintains its original structure as a co-operative, and is involved in grass-roots level development work in many communities, which provide it with extensive networks of Aboriginal advice and support. Kevin Cook, an Aboriginal union organiser from the building industry and a graduate of the college, is secretary of the co-operative. Another Tranby graduate, Jack Beetson, who is also president of FIAEP, followed Kevin Cook into the position of college director.

In the year of the study, Tranby was in the process of refocussing its profile towards greater specialisation in courses specifically developed for the college and its 'clientele', and away from offering adapted versions of courses available elsewhere in the VET system, such as through NSW TAFE. It still ran one of these courses, since discontinued, a generalist preparatory-level Certificate in Adult Foundation Education. Its other two courses, offered for the first time in 1997, were designed for people wanting to work in and with their own Aboriginal communities. These were the Diploma of Development Studies: Aboriginal Communities and the Diploma of National Indigenous Legal Studies. The latter was the result of a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and was developed by the Office of the Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. In 1999 a further course, the Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Studies, was added to the profile. In the year of the study, Tranby's total enrolment across the three courses offered was 83 students.

3.2 National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association, College of Dance

NAISDA was the first tertiary dance institution established in New South Wales, the first performing arts and training institution catering to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation to be granted diploma status accreditation in dance and related performing arts skills. The college is a specialised institution of national and international renown. It began operations in Sydney in 1975, providing a three-year course in dance and related fields for Indigenous students, with support from the Commonwealth Government, the result of a six-week pilot initiative three years earlier. NAISDA has been attracting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from all over Australia since then, building up a strong body of professional performers and, since 1991, also supporting its own professional dance company, the Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre. Jon Alderman, the director at the time this study began, has since left, and his successor is Robert Jackson, previously an active member of the NAISDA Board.

NAISDA now offers three accredited programs: a one-year certificate, a two-year associate diploma and a three-year diploma, all in dance. The courses include Cultural Studies, which leads on to the Cultural Residency Program, Practical Dance Studies, Creative Studies, Production Studies and Allied Arts Studies. There are also three specially designed programs: Aboriginal Dance Apprenticeship Training, Remote Area Teaching Tour and End of Year Production. These three programs allow students to participate in activities with mainstream dance organisations, tours to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and schools, and public performances. On completion of these courses, students are able to pursue careers as professional dancers, dance teachers, graphic and visual arts workers, costume and set designers, arts administrators, musicians and choreographers. In the year of the survey, total enrolments were 52.

3.3 Tauondi Inc.

Tauondi, from the language of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains, meaning 'to break through', was chosen in 1993 to replace this college's original name, the Aboriginal Community College, which grew originally from a program begun in the late 1960s within the Western Teachers' College in Adelaide, South Australia, later part of the Torrens College of Advanced Education (CAE). From this early work, the fruit of an alliance between Aboriginal leader Gladys Elphick and a non-Aboriginal lecturer, John Morley, led to a general, or basic, adult education program, which began with Commonwealth funding in June 1973. Although most people involved from the start wanted to be independent, the Commonwealth required the college to operate as part of the Torrens CAE. A long struggle ensued before full independence was achieved, with the college being formally recognised as an independent Aboriginal institution under the management of an all-Aboriginal council on 1 January 1982. Many national

Aboriginal education leaders played key roles in these struggles, including Paul Hughes[5] and Stephen Albert of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, and Peter Buckskin, a chair of the college council in that period, who now heads up the Indigenous Education Branch of DETYA. In 1990 Lillian Holt, who had been the college secretary when it began in 1973, became its first Aboriginal principal. In 1996 she handed over to her then deputy, Bill Wilson, who is the current director.[6]

From 1993 onwards, the college refocussed its profile to take account of national changes both in the VET system and in Aboriginal education. Tauondi's 1997 program included several preparatory certificates, and professional and para-professional courses in tour guiding and cultural instruction, office and clerical skills, community services and health, and applied and visual arts. Its total enrolment in that year was 150.

3.4 Institute for Aboriginal Development

IAD opened in Alice Springs in 1969, as a cross-cultural education and training centre and hostel for women visiting Alice Springs from the Pitjantjatjara lands to the south for medical treatment. Throughout the 1970s its founding director, the Reverend Jim Downing of the Uniting Church, worked with local Aboriginal groups to run non-accredited programs of adult education and community development, as well as 'cross-culture' awareness and language programs for non-Aboriginal workers. In 1981 IAD's first Aboriginal director, Yami Lester, took over and, in the years following, control was transferred to an all-Aboriginal board on which sit representatives of all the major local Indigenous organisations. Through the 1980s and 1990s IAD slowly built up international renown as a centre for research into central Australian languages and history. During this period its publications arm, IAD Press, was also established. It also played an active role in local and national campaigns for greater Aboriginal control over Aboriginal education. Its educational programs have expanded over the past 30 years to include a wide range of VET accredited programs, many of which have been developed on site in consultation with local organisations and communities. It also now provides on-site higher education programs up to postgraduate level, by arrangement with universities. Its current director, Donna Ah Chee, is a graduate both of Tranby and of IAD's management training programs, and the vice-president of FIAEP.

IAD's profile in 1997 included:

- non-accredited and informal community education programs—local language teaching in primary schools, Aboriginal cultural awareness programs, and workplace literacy and numeracy courses
- accredited VET work and life skills programs—a tertiary preparation course, and professional and para-professional programs in land management, tourism, interpreting, vernacular literacy, teaching Indigenous languages, community work, workplace training and assessment, office skills and Aboriginal management
- higher education programs—master's, graduate certificate and bachelor's programs in education, counselling and management

IAD's total enrolment in 1997 was 392 students.

4 Project methodology

4.1 Project design and management

The research project, which ran from April 1998 to March 1999, involved the collective efforts of the FIAEP secretariat and directors, staff from the participating colleges and NCVER. The original brief was negotiated between the FIAEP directors and their secretariat staff, and NCVER's Managing Director, Chris Robinson. The overall co-ordination of the project was the responsibility of the federation secretariat, in the person of Deborah Durnan, who worked from her base as a manager in one of the participating colleges, the IAD. Project management was the responsibility of the directors of the FIAEP: Jack Beetson (Tranby), Donna Ah Chee (IAD), Bill Wilson (Tauondi), and Jon Alderman and Robert Jackson (NAISDA). In addition, a steering committee was appointed to provide advice and support to the project, consisting of Chris Robinson (NCVER); Lionel Bamblett, Executive Director of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI); Debra Maidment, IAD Assistant Director and Director of Research, representing the FIAEP; and Bob Boughton, Indigenous Education Research Fellow at the Menzies School of Health Research in Alice Springs.

Deborah Durnan designed the initial questionnaire, drawing on the Australian Vocational Education & Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS), on previous survey work in VET (McIntyre 1996; Teasdale & Teasdale 1996), and on the questionnaires developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for the Census of Population and Housing and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS). These models were chosen so that findings would be comparable with the national VET data collection and the findings from these other studies. Further assistance and input to the survey design were provided by the FIAEP directors, and the steering committee, which met for this purpose in Adelaide in June 1998. A survey booklet was produced, combining structured and open-ended interview questions, and questions to be answered from the colleges' student record systems. Deborah Durnan and Bob Boughton ran action research workshops with each of the four participating colleges to train their nominated staff to administer the survey. The survey questionnaire is included at appendix 4.

The data collection was done under contract to the project, on behalf of their colleges, by Lisa Connor, Julie Doyle, Shirley Erlandson, Don Hayward, Kayleen O'Loughlin, Cos Russo, Peter Sevellos, Carol Speechley and Les Wanganeen. They conducted the interviews with the students.

NCVER's Brian Harvey designed a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet into which the data were entered, and also assisted with analysis of some cross-tabulations, for which he translated the original data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The completed survey questionnaires were checked, coded and entered by the project's Alice Springs-based research assistant, Anne Every, who worked with Bob Boughton and Deborah Durnan to produce an initial set of tables and graphs summarising the results. An FIAEP directors' meeting on 29 September – 1 October 1998 reviewed the results of this initial analysis, and provided drafting instructions in relation to this report. The steering committee then met on 1 October to consider the analysis to date and the directors' recommendations, and to add their advice as to additional analysis and the contents of the report. The remaining analysis, including the cross-tabulations, was then undertaken and a draft version of the report produced by Bob Boughton and Deborah Durnan (as the report's authors) and circulated to the FIAEP directors and the steering committee members for comment in March 1999. This final report incorporates their comments. Chris Robinson of the NCVER edited the report.

4.2 Ethical issues

The ethics of research in Aboriginal communities is an important issue for projects such as this one. The questionnaire, at appendix 4, was both exhaustive and intensive and, in the case of some questions, personally quite intrusive. For each respondent, informed consent was obtained to conduct the interview, and when such questions arose, it was made clear that there was an option not to answer. Note that the survey booklet included specific instructions to this effect on the first page, and there was a consent form that had to be signed by both the student and the college director before the interview could begin. The college removed these forms, which identified the students, before the questionnaires were forwarded to the project co-ordinator for data entry, but kept them to allow checking of data during the analysis stage. The other major ethical consideration is the degree to which Aboriginal people and their organisations are not just asked for their consent, but are also able to exercise some control over the research agenda and process.

Anyone contemplating similar research with Aboriginal students should take note of the following procedures, which we adopted to ensure a high standard of research ethics:

- The original proposal for the survey, including the research questions it was designed to answer, was negotiated in the initial stages with the Aboriginal directors of the colleges.
- The detailed questions were thoroughly reviewed by the Aboriginal directors and staff in the participating colleges.
- Staff administering the questionnaire were employees of the participating colleges, who were in all but two cases Aboriginal themselves, and in every case were already well known to the students.
- No questionnaire was administered without informed consent from the student concerned, confirmed by the college director.

- As set out on the survey form, respondents were also explicitly offered the opportunity not to respond to certain questions.
- It was made absolutely clear that no information would be collected which allowed anyone outside the college to identify the respondents to the survey, and all names were removed by the colleges before the survey forms were sent on for data entry.
- The Aboriginal directors also specified that no data would be published that would allow individual college results to be identified.
- The directors had the opportunity to review and comment on the initial findings, and to negotiate with the steering committee on the final content of this report.[7]

4.3 Survey size and response rate

The survey was administered in the four participating colleges in June–July 1998. The total number of completed questionnaires received for analysis was 389, which represented over 57 per cent of the total enrolment of over 680 students in accredited programs in those colleges in 1997. Thus the sample reflects 57 per cent of all students who enrolled in at least one module of an accredited VET program in 1997 in the four colleges. The data, therefore, are drawn from a significant sample of the total student population in the four colleges, and of the sector as a whole. It should be noted that the students in accredited programs in the four participating colleges accounted for over 80 per cent of such students in all FIAEP colleges. In terms of the total Indigenous students in VET across Australia, the data represent 1.2 per cent of 1996 enrolments.[8]

Response rates from the participating colleges ranged from 50 per cent to 96 per cent of their 1997 enrolments. Because of difficulties in contacting students who had left, the sample may be skewed slightly towards completing and continuing students. However, every effort was made to track down those who had moved on, and this was successful in most cases because of the close-knit nature of the communities concerned. The survey process was overseen by the four participating colleges who have very high levels of knowledge about the characteristics of their student bodies. Based on their assessment, there is no evidence to suggest that the results are skewed, and the survey response rate is comparable with those for other surveys, such as the national TAFE Graduate Destination Survey.

5 Characteristics of the student population

One of the objectives of the study was to provide summary information about the students who study in this sector, both to assist the sector's own decision-making and advocacy work, and for purposes of comparison with mainstream VET statistics, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Except where indicated otherwise, the comparisons in this report are with 1996 statistics in the cases of Indigenous students in the rest of the VET sector and all VET students. Further statistics (just compiled) about Indigenous students and all students in the VET sector in 1997 are in appendix 2.

5.1 Aboriginality

The most important point to note is that in this sector *all* the students are Indigenous[9] and this is reflected in the survey. This compares with the VET system overall, where identified Indigenous enrolments in 1996 were only 2.5 per cent of total enrolments. This identifies the colleges as specialist 'equity' institutions, in that they are devoting virtually 100 per cent of their resources and programs to the VET system's equity goals. However, Aboriginal students are themselves an extremely diverse group, and the following sections discuss some significant characteristics of the student population, including gender, age range, affiliation to country and kin, languages spoken, social issues impacting on them, and previous educational and employment history.

5.2 Gender

The gender ratio female:male in our sample was 1.8:1; that is, there were almost double the number of women as men, as shown in table 1. This differs from VET generally, where Indigenous students enrolled in 1996 in approximately equal proportions of men and women, and from non-Indigenous VET students, for whom the proportion of men slightly exceeded that of women. In only one of the four colleges did the ratio approach a balance. There are several possible explanations, one being the much higher rate of custody among young Indigenous men, discussed below under 'Social issues'.

Table 1: Students by gender

	Male	Female	Total
Number	138	251	**389**
Per cent	35	65	**100**

5.3 Age

The students in the sample ranged in age from 16 to 64. The largest proportion, nearly 40 per cent, were in their twenties, with a significant number (nearly 12%) of teenagers, and a quarter aged 40 or over (table 2).

Two features stand out when comparisons are made with the national system data. First, teenagers made up a smaller proportion of the total enrolment in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges than they did in the national VET system. The corollary of this is the higher proportion of older people in the former, especially those in their forties and fifties.

This may reflect the fact that historically the colleges have been seen by their communities as *their* institutions and so as likely to be more welcoming to older students returning to learning. However, it also reflects an Aboriginal practice, which communities and the colleges encourage, of having older people present when younger people are learning. The reason given for this is that older people are custodians of knowledge and major authority figures, and should therefore be in a position to have input into the learning of younger ones and operate as mentors and guides. It is extremely common for classes to include at least one older student, often related to the younger students, who plays this role. These data should therefore be considered alongside the qualitative data collected in the *Best practice* study (FIAEP 1997b), where this aspect of Aboriginal pedagogy was discussed at length.

Table 2: Students by age cohort, independent sector and national

Age cohort	Number	Per cent	All Indigenous VET students (%)	Non-Indigenous VET students (%)
15–19	45	11.6	22.2	21.0
20–29	154	39.6	32.7	31.4
30–39	89	22.9	21.8	21.7
40–49	63	16.2	11.2	15.0
50–59	31	8.0	4.2	5.8
60–69	5	1.3	1.4	2.1
Not known	2	0.5	5.2	2.7

5.4 Identity and language

The overwhelming majority of students (72%) identified not simply as Aboriginal or Indigenous, but also as from one or more specific language,

tribal or clan groups, as shown in table 3. This illustrates the extraordinary diversity of cultures and histories that come together in this sector. Affiliations included the following, either singly or in combination:

> *Adnyamathanha, Alyawarre, Anmatyerre, Arrernte, Athinamutra, Bidjara, Budjiti, Bungalong, Darug, Dungutti, Jawoyn, Kaigas, Kaurna, Kujani, Kukatha, Lamalama, Luritja, Midjungbal, Mirning, Mudgera, Naatjatjarra, Ngaanyatjarra, Narrindjeri, Nunggarumadiyi, Nurrunga, Pertame, Pintupi, Pitjantjatjara, Tharawal, Tiwi, Tjabakai, Torres Strait, Waerego, Waka Waka, Warlpiri, Warumungu, Wemawemba, Wiradjiri, Yankunytjatjara, Yidindji, Yugenba, and Yuin.*

Table 3: Identification with clan, tribal or language group

	Yes	No	Not known	Total
Number	282	31	76	**389**
Per cent	72	8	20	**100**

Table 4 shows also that a third of students spoke one or more Aboriginal language, while a majority knew at least some language words. This further illustrates the cultural richness and diversity of the student population, something currently not being picked up adequately through the AVETMISS reporting system for the national VET system.

Table 4: Aboriginal language spoken

	Yes	Some words	No	Total
Number	130	88	171	**389**
Per cent	33	23	44	**100**

Moreover, of the students who spoke an Aboriginal language, there was a significant number (77) who indicated that this was the language they spoke at home (table 5). While the majority of respondents (242) did speak English at home, a further significant finding was that the number who said they spoke Aboriginal English, Creole or 'broken English' at home was almost as high as those who spoke an Aboriginal language (table 5), and the combined effect is that 38 per cent were not using Standard English as their normal means of communication.

Table 5: Main language used at home

	English	Aboriginal English etc.	Aboriginal language	Total
Number	242	70	77	**389**
Per cent	62	18	20	**100**

These data highlight the importance of recognising and valuing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the student population in this sector, and the need for programs (such as vernacular literacy and interpreting courses) that bring Aboriginal languages into the curriculum as something positive, rather than

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as addressing a 'deficit'. Furthermore, since Standard English is the usual language of instruction, curriculum and resources in VET, these data indicate that for 38 per cent of students there is the potential for a 'lack of fit' between learners and programs wherever colleges have to rely on mainstream curriculum and resources, and on teaching staff who do not come from the same linguistic and cultural background. Attempts to overcome this have resource implications, including the need for English as a second language (ESL) support.[10] It is important not to treat this simply as an index of 'disadvantage' which students (and teachers) have to overcome. Nevertheless, we found that nearly 12 per cent of students reported difficulty being understood when they went to a service or office where only English was spoken, and the colleges' programs have to help students learn to handle this.[11] There is clearly an ongoing need to support the sector's efforts to provide specialist curriculum, resources and teachers appropriate to their students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.[12]

5.5 Previous educational history

The Committee of Inquiry into Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, chaired by Mick Miller, provided the first concrete evidence that improved education and training levels could substantially improve the employment prospects of Indigenous people. The review (Committee of Review into Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs 1985) reported that:

- Aboriginal people with university or TAFE qualifications were twice as likely to be employed than Indigenous people without any post-school qualifications.
- Among those with bachelor, higher degree qualifications, diploma or trade certificate qualifications employment rates differed very little between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
- Indigenous people had much lower rates of employment than non-Indigenous people if they had no qualifications.

More recent work (Hunter 1996), by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University, has reinforced this finding. CAEPR has analysed the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey data to show that 'education is the largest single factor influencing Indigenous employment'. CAEPR went on to show that 'having a post-school qualification increases the chances of employment by between 13.0% and 25.5%' (Hunter 1996, pp. 4–5).

In 1996 approximately 28 per cent of Indigenous VET students nationally had not completed Year 10 or above before entering their course. In the independent sector, our survey showed that a much higher proportion of students (46%) had not completed Year 10 (Year 10 is the normal minimum entry level for a VET course). By comparison, among non-Indigenous students nationally in 1996, only 7 per cent had not completed Year 10, less than a sixth the proportion in our survey. We also allowed people to choose from options lower than Year 9, and the results are set out in table 6, which shows that many respondents had missed out on basic school education. This was more likely for the older students, who were at school age in a

period when there was even less attention than there is now to the needs of Aboriginal students.

Table 6: Highest year of schooling attained

Highest year of school	Number	Per cent	Cum. %
Primary school	24	6	–
Year 7	47	12	6
Year 8	41	11	18
Year 9	68	17	29
Year 10	91	23	46
Year 11	59	15	70
Year 12	43	11	85
Not known	16	4	96
Total	**389**	**100**	**100**

Table 7: Number of courses completed before 1997

Previous qualifications	Number	Per cent
None	293	75
One	61	16
Two	29	7
More than two	5	1
Not specified	1	0
Total	**389**	**100**

Table 8: Highest pre-1997 qualification

Highest qualification	Number	Per cent
No qualification	293	75
Certificate 1	4	1
Certificate 2	0	0
Certificate 3	72	19
Certificate 4	9	2
Diploma	5	1
Advanced diploma	4	1
Degree	0	0
Higher degree	0	0
Not specified	2	1
Total	**389**	**100**

Besides school education, students were also asked whether, before their 1997 enrolment, they had completed any post-school qualifications or

courses that lasted six months or more, and a significant minority, 25 per cent (n = 96), said that they had. A small minority (8%) had completed two or more courses. Tables 7 and 8 show the number of courses students had completed, and the highest level of qualification reached before they began their 1997 courses.

A further 28 per cent (n = 108) of students in our study had commenced courses but not completed them, for a variety of reasons, of which the most common given were family, cultural and community obligations (83), and bereavement (20).

These data confirm that one should make very few assumptions about the previous educational level of students in this sector. Even those who do not enrol in catch-up or preparatory courses may well need specialist assistance to work at the level a course requires. The corollary is that courses that have been designed for the 'average' VET system student may be based on assumptions about previous schooling which do not apply for Indigenous students. The best results for Indigenous students are frequently obtained when courses and programs are designed especially for them. These factors also mean that in many cases it is also necessary to provide extra student support and/or allow more time for completion.

5.6 Family situation

The majority of students were single people, as shown in table 9.

Table 9: Family status

Family status	Number	Per cent
Single	259	67
Married/defacto	130	33
Total	**389**	**100**

A significant minority, more than a third, had children in their care while they were enrolled in the course (table 10).

Table 10: Caring for children

Caring for children	Number	Per cent
Yes	149	38
No	240	62
Total	**389**	**100**

Of those caring for children, more than half (n = 75) were single. This amounts to a fifth of total enrolments. These two statistics taken together present strong evidence in support of claims made by the colleges that provision of adequate child care on site or nearby is a major issue for them.

5.7 Social issues

A number of inquiries and reports have highlighted the extent to which the independent Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector caters for students with a variety of special needs, in particular students who are at serious risk physically, socially or emotionally. Many of these have problems with which 'mainstream' VET providers are often ill equipped to deal. For example, the role of the independents in meeting the needs of such students was underlined by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADC 1991) and again in the Senate Inquiry into Adult and Community Education (Senate Committee on Employment, Education and Training 1997). A recent study by the FIAEP (1997a) demonstrated how little the implications of the findings of the Royal Commission had been acted upon. Another study, involving interviews with staff, students and community members, highlighted the central role that dealing with such issues played in perceptions of what was 'best practice' in this sector (FIAEP 1997b).

Until this project, however, the independent sector has had to rely on anecdotal evidence to demonstrate their work in this area, and this was a major reason the FIAEP directors agreed to include a large number of questions about social conditions in this survey. Moreover, the impact of incarceration on the chances (reducing them by around half) of Indigenous people's achieving comparable education and training or employment has been well documented (see for instance Broadhurst et al. 1998).

The social issues that we canvassed in the survey in order to see how they interacted with the educational activities of the independent sector were:

- forced separation of children from families
- contact with the law and the justice system
- personal and domestic violence
- substance abuse
- physical and mental health

Table 11 sets out responses to questions on these issues. Note that students were in each case given the option of not answering these questions, and so the percentage giving a positive answer may understate the extent of the problem in the total sample.

These figures confirm that, on a wide range of indicators, a significant minority of the student population in this sector is 'at risk'. Nearly a third reported a bereavement or other major stress during the year they were studying. Over 10 per cent had parents from the 'stolen generations', and nearly the same proportion reported having been taken away themselves. Even though many chose not to answer the questions regarding police and gaol, nearly one-fifth said they had been arrested and/or had served time in gaol. Men were more likely to have been arrested (19% of male respondents compared with 15% of female students), and more likely to have been in custody (27% compared with 16%). A similar proportion of respondents overall had been subjected to physical threats or violence in the year they were studying. Alcohol and other drug abuse had also been a factor in many people's lives.

Table 11: Selected social problems and issues affecting students

Social problems and issues	Number	Per cent
Taken away from natural family	36	9
Parents taken away from natural family	45	12
Arrested before 1997	64	16
Arrested during 1997	24	6
Been in custody	77	20
Attacked or threatened in 1997	66	17
Alcohol abuse before 1997	76	20
Tobacco abuse before 1997	109	28
Other drug abuse before 1997	58	15
Health problems in 1997	72	19
Mental health problems in 1997	9	2
Stress/bereavement in 1997	121	31

These figures validate claims made by the colleges that they need to apply considerable resources to dealing with the social issues confronting their students, and that they are catering for a student group which has much more than its share of these problems, compared to an 'average' student population in VET. They also show that such students are prepared to come to these colleges to study in perhaps greater proportions that they do to the mainstream VET colleges. Finally, these issues will inevitably have some impact on the outcomes students achieve, in terms of module completions and ability to move on to employment and/or further study.

These results clearly demonstrate that outcomes from programs offered by Aboriginal community-controlled colleges should not be measured simply in terms of quantitative indicators, such as module completion rates. The problem is that such measures alone do not capture information about an essential function the sector is performing in the Aboriginal community. That function is to provide safe and supportive Aboriginal environments in which students can learn collectively how to deal with the effects that racism and dispossession have had on their own lives and those of their families and communities. How one measures these outcomes was one question this survey sought to answer, and this is taken up in a later section.

5.8 Employment history

High unemployment levels are a major factor contributing to poverty and ill health in Indigenous communities, and part of the rationale for improving VET provision is to increase people's chances of obtaining employment. In order to assess the impact that the independent sector has in this area, we decided to look at the previous employment history of people studying in the sector. Students were therefore asked whether they had ever had paid employment in the two years before the survey year (1997). The results, set out in table 12, show that nearly two-thirds of students had not done any paid work in the previous two years, either part time or full time.

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Table 12: Recent employment history

Paid employment 1994–96	Number	Per cent
Yes	141	36
No	248	64
Total	**389**	**100**

Of those who had worked, most had been in one job only, but a small number (28) had experienced two jobs, and a few had had three or four jobs.

The most striking feature of these results is the proportion of the total number of jobs held that had been in Aboriginal organisations. As table 13 shows, 53 per cent of all previous jobs had been in Aboriginal organisations. A high proportion of these previous jobs (71% in the case of those who had had only one job) had been full time. These results support previous findings detailing the close relationships between the colleges and their students and other Aboriginal community organisations.[13]

To summarise the data on employment history, most respondents coming into courses in the independent sector had had no employment over the previous two years. This reflects very high rates of unemployment in Aboriginal communities generally. Of those who had worked, the majority had been employed in their own community organisations, in full-time jobs. The corollary is that only 25 per cent of students had experienced full-time employment in the previous two years, and a further 10 per cent had had some part-time employment.

Table 13: Previous employment by employer type

	Total employed (no.)	Jobs in Aboriginal organisations (no.)	Per cent in Aboriginal organisations
Job 1	140	79	56
Job 2	28	12	43
Job 3	9	3	33
Job 4	2	0	0
Total	**179**	**94**	**53**

6 The learning experiences of students enrolled in 1997

We now turn to an analysis of the educational experiences the students in the participating Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges had in 1997. The survey sought to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in this area, reflecting the view of the colleges themselves that they are not there simply to achieve numerical results such as module completions, important though these may be.

In this section we describe the participation in different VET courses and programs, and the other services available to students in the Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector.

6.1 Course types and levels

The 389 students in the survey were studying in 31 different courses across the four colleges. The majority of the students who responded to the survey (52%) were enrolled in eight courses, with the other 48 per cent spread across the remaining 23 courses. A level-2 certificate land management course was the most popular course, accounting for 10 per cent of the total sample. The eight most frequently appearing courses included a diploma, two associate diplomas, two level-2 certificates and three prevocational courses. The breakdown by level of course is set out in table 14.

Table 14: Course level

Course level	Number	Per cent
Prevocational/preparatory courses	112	29
Certificate	182	47
Associate diploma	44	11
Diploma	43	11
Advanced diploma	8	2
Total	**389**	**100**

The data refute the common misconception among other VET providers and funding agencies that the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector's role is to offer preparatory courses for students who wish to enter 'mainstream' institutions at a later date. In our sample, enrolments in preparatory courses represented 29 per cent of the total, which is

significantly less than the corresponding figure in the national VET collection the previous year, which was 47 per cent. Furthermore, nearly one-quarter of the independent-sector students surveyed were studying at professional or para-professional level (that is, diploma, associate diploma or advanced diploma level), which is *three* times the equivalent figure (8%) for Indigenous VET students nationally. This result places the independent sector at the forefront in achieving a major priority of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and of ANTA's Access and Equity Policy.[14]

6.2 Course length, mode and delivery

One-third of the students surveyed had done courses of six months or less, but the majority were enrolled in one and two-year long programs (table 15), with a small minority doing three-year programs of study, which included 'nested' courses at a lower level.

Table 15: Length of course

Length of course	Number	Per cent
Six months or less	129	33
One year	149	38
Two years or more	110	28
Total	**388**	**100**

Only 18 students, 5 per cent of those surveyed, were taking their courses as part of a traineeship or apprenticeship, suggesting that the takeup of such programs is very low in this sector. This deserves further investigation, since 'new apprenticeships' are a key feature of the Commonwealth Government's priorities in VET.

A small minority of students reported studying in mixed mode, on the job, by block release or remote from the college, but the vast majority (79%) studied on campus (these choices were not mutually exclusive). This is shown in table 16.

Table 16: Delivery modes

Delivery modes	Number
Block release	59
Local class	309
Remote class	24
Self-paced	2
External	0
Workplace	4
Mixed	24

This is also reflected in the data on delivery sites, where most students reported studying on campus (table 17). However, 25 per cent of students

were studying in their communities or outstations, a much higher proportion than were studying in workplaces. This is a reflection of the low rates of employment among students in this sector, but at the same time it demonstrates that the sector is trying to deliver programs where people are living, which is where some of the most important work needs to be done, from the point of view of the communities themselves and their development goals.[15]

Table 17: Delivery sites

Delivery site	Number
Main campus	285
Workplace	6
Community/outstation	96

Although the amount of workplace-based delivery was small, a third or more students had done courses that included some form of experience-based activity, either on the job or through community placements (table 18).

Table 18: Workplace and community components

Experience-based training	Number	Per cent
On-the-job training	140	35
Work experience	158	40
Community or work placement	130	33

A large proportion of students had also been on field trips as part of their course, although only a small proportion (10%) had had the opportunity for interstate trips (table 19), reflecting the difficulty there is in obtaining Abstudy assistance for such travel.

Table 19: Field trips

Field trips	Number	Per cent
Local	293	74
Regional	239	60
State	88	22
Interstate	38	10

Seventy students, 18 per cent of the sample, reported that their courses had provided them with some choice in modules, in the form of electives, and 17 per cent obtained recognition of prior learning (RPL) (table 20).

The RPL rate is one of the performance indicators specified in the Indigenous Education Agreements, which secure Commonwealth funding for colleges in the sector, and yet the rate in the sample appears quite low, especially given the large numbers of mature-age students. Perhaps this is because no funding was provided to set up RPL procedures, and no work had been completed in 1997, the survey year, on adapting RPL to Indigenous contexts

or on training Indigenous assessors. This has since changed, and figures should be expected to improve in coming years.[16]

Table 20: Recognition of prior learning

RPL	Number	Per cent
Yes	68	17
No	321	83
Total	**389**	**100**

While in one college, which provides specialist courses, over 50 per cent of students were from interstate, this was not reflected in the sample overall. Table 21 shows that the majority of students were studying not only in their home State, but also in their home city. This is relevant to debates about the cost of Abstudy assistance to this sector. There is, however, one qualification, in that it appears that students who lived on outstations in the vicinity of one college counted the town as their 'home city' even though they lived at a considerable distance from it.

Table 21: Studying home and away

Place of study	Number	Per cent
Home city	343	88
Home State	20	5
Interstate	26	7
Total	**389**	**100**

6.3 Choice of course

The vast majority of students found out about their course from family, friends, workmates or community members (71%), compared with very small numbers who responded to information from employers (9%), newspaper advertisements (3%), schools (1%) or government agency referrals (1%). This underlines the importance of word-of-mouth communication for recruitment in Aboriginal communities.

Reasons students gave for choosing the courses they did are set out in table 22.[17] The options students were offered in this question grew from an earlier FIAEP study (FIAEP 1997b), which identified a variety of reasons students gave concerning why the independent community-controlled colleges were 'best-practice' providers. The results reported in table 22 support with quantitative data what the previous study found through qualitative investigation, namely that students in this sector are much more inclined to nominate personal and community goals than vocational ones as their reasons for choosing to pursue their studies.[18]

Table 22: Reasons students chose their course

Reasons for choosing course	Number	Per cent
To learn new knowledge/skills	329	85
For personal interest	265	68
To gain confidence	241	62
To allow further study	213	55
To work for community	182	47
To overcome personal difficulties	175	45
To meet community goals	167	43
To work for Aboriginal organisations	164	42
To strengthen Aboriginal identity	162	42
To help get a job	158	41
To gain extra skills for current job	105	27
To help children/grandchildren with homework	105	27
To help get a better job	62	16
To change career	50	13
For promotion within current job	29	7

6.4 Aboriginal involvement in course delivery

Increased Aboriginal involvement in delivery of educational programs has long been thought to be associated with improved outcomes. It is a major goal of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, and was one of the major factors identified by students and staff as an aspect of 'best practice' in a previous study (FIAEP 1997b, pp. 27–28). The questionnaire asked whether there were Aboriginal teachers, whether the course included mentoring by Aboriginal people, and how regularly Aboriginal people were used as guest lecturers. The results, in table 23, show a very high rate of Aboriginal involvement in course delivery, with, for example, over two-thirds of students reporting that they had been taught by Aboriginal teachers.

Table 23: Aboriginal involvement in course delivery

Aboriginal involvement	Number	Per cent
Aboriginal teachers	265	67
Aboriginal mentors	202	51
Aboriginal guest lecturers sometimes or often	315	79

6.5 Academic support

Another factor identified in the *Best practice* study (FIAEP 1997b) was the large amount of support students felt they received in an Aboriginal

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community-controlled college to help them academically. This is borne out in the results shown in table 24. However, the percentage of students who reported that they had a tutor funded by Abstudy was quite low, at 17 per cent. This should improve in future years, now that the FIAEP has been successful in negotiating the same bulk-funding arrangements for tutors in the independent sector as DETYA has provided to the higher education sector in the past. In 1997, however, this was not available, and Abstudy-funded tutors were appointed on a case-by-case basis, requiring time-consuming negotiations among students, the colleges, the individual tutors and the local office of DETYA.

Table 24: Academic support for students

Type of support	Number	Per cent
Help provided with English literacy	138	35
Teachers available and supportive	381	98
Help provided with how to study	337	87
Abstudy tutor provided	68	17

It should be noted, however, that under bulk funding arrangements the resourcing of tutorial support is based on a maximum takeup of 20 per cent of total enrolments, whereas in this study 35 per cent of students were given help with literacy, and 87 per cent were given help with study skills (table 24). These figures compare favourably with those concerning language, which showed 38 per cent of students not using Standard English at home, and with those for previous educational attainment, which showed that nearly 50 per cent of students had not progressed beyond Year 9 at school. All this suggests that considerably more than 20 per cent of students in this sector would benefit from additional tutorial support.

6.6 Other support services

We would anticipate that 'non-academic' support services are just as important as academic support to students' ability to survive and flourish during their time at the colleges, especially given the experiences many students have had previously, both with educational institutions and with various social problems. Table 25 sets out the numbers of students who said they had received support across a range of areas, including:

- obtaining and maintaining their student assistance payments under Abstudy
- fulfilling family, community and cultural obligations
- transportation
- counselling
- nutrition (which usually meant the provision of at least one meal a day)

The numbers of students accessing the first six categories in table 25 implies a sizable investment of resources by the colleges in these services.

Table 25: Other types of support

Other support	Number	Per cent
Abstudy	326	84
Meeting family and community obligations and responsibilities	268	69
Meeting cultural obligations and responsibilities	268	69
Transportation to and from courses and related activities	245	63
Counselling services	149	38
Nutrition service	140	36
After-hours facilities for personal study	46	12
Accommodation	39	10
Budgeting and banking	30	8
Child care	29	7
Health services, including treatment for drug and alcohol abuse	15	4
Other	2	1

It is worth noting the low number of students who accessed any help with child care, given the data presented earlier about the number of students with children in their care, and particularly the number of single parents. There also seem to be few students accessing assistance with health problems, including alcohol and other drug abuse. Perhaps this reflects the fact that the colleges refer students to other agencies for these services, via their counselling functions, rather than attempting to provide them themselves.

6.7 Facilities

In the years before this survey, the independent colleges mounted a national lobbying campaign for funding with which to upgrade their aging and run-down facilities, and three of the four participating colleges are now, or will soon be, rebuilding and renovating their capital infrastructure. At the time of the survey, however, and in contrast to the strongly positive evaluations students made of their courses and programs, students expressed strong dissatisfaction about facilities, including libraries, equipment and teaching spaces, with an average of 69 per cent of respondents being discontented in these three areas across the four colleges. This average masks much higher rates in the more run-down colleges, especially IAD, the one college still awaiting its capital allocation.

6.8 Student satisfaction

Student satisfaction with their courses was assessed through a variety of questions, some of which were answered in conversational form and have not been analysed here. The survey did, however, contain one question

which gives an indication of the level of student satisfaction in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges. The question concerned whether the college offered the 'right course' for the respondent. The answers are reported in table 26. The results suggest a very high level of student satisfaction in terms of their choice of course, with 96 per cent saying they agreed or strongly agreed that their chosen course was the right course for them.

Table 26: Student satisfaction with course choice

Right course	Number	Per cent
Strongly disagree	5	1
Disagree	14	4
Agree	84	22
Strongly agree	286	74
Total	**389**	**100**

6.9 Employment during course

As shown in table 27, a small number of students, less than one-fifth, were employed during their studies, most of them part time.

Table 27: Employment during course

Employed during course	Number	Per cent
Part time	46	12
Full time	28	7
Total	**74**	**19**

Of those who did have employment, the vast majority (73%) were working in Aboriginal organisations. This is shown in table 28.

Table 28: Employer type for those employed during the course

Employer type	Number	Per cent
Aboriginal organisation	54	73
Government	8	11
Private	9	12
Self-employed	3	4
Total	**74**	**100**

6.10 Other financial support

A large proportion of students, over 90 per cent, received some form of government support while studying, and Abstudy was by far the most common form of assistance (table 29). Students can receive part-time Abstudy assistance (a small amount paid towards course materials costs) even if they are employed, and so figures for employer support and full-time employment do not 'net off' with those for Abstudy. The small number working in the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)[19] while studying is worth noting, and suggests a lack of takeup of courses in this sector by existing CDEP participants. From table 29 it is also possible to identify that a small number of students were receiving some support from parents.

Finally, table 29 shows that some 11 per cent of students were sponsored by their employer. Of these, all but four worked in Aboriginal organisations.

Table 29: Means of financial support during studies

Means of support	Number	Per cent
Government		
Abstudy	332	85
Supporting parent	10	3
CDEP	4	1
Disability pension	4	1
Age pension	2	1
Scholarship	1	0
Unemployment	1	0
Other	1	0
Sickness	0	0
Subtotal government	355	91
Parents	18	5
Employer	43	11

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7 The outcomes attained by students

This section of the report details findings from the sections of the questionnaire that dealt with attendance, academic outcomes, employment outcomes and overall assessments by the students of their experiences.

7.1 Attendance

Attendance was self-rated, with the results set out in table 30. Just under half of the students reported an attendance rate exceeding 80 per cent.

Table 30: Self-rated attendance

Attendance record	Number	Per cent
Less than 50%	66	17
Between 50% and 80%	137	35
Between 80% and 100%	186	48
Total	**389**	**100**

The main reasons for non-attendance are reported in table 31. The most commonly cited ones were family obligations, ill health, bereavement and cultural obligations. It is worth noting the large number of students for whom ill health was the main reason for non-attendance.

Apart from ill health, the other three of the first four reasons for non-attendance relate to family, community and cultural obligations, of which an important one is bereavement. This confirms evidence from other sources, including the *Best practice* study (FIAEP 1997b). However, it was made clear in that study that it was important to the colleges and their students not to frame these obligations negatively, because they are important aspects of Aboriginal life which the independent providers seek to affirm:

> *One often cited example* [of Aboriginal decision-making] *was that decisions about what staff and students should (not can) take leave to do included ceremonial and other cultural duties, such as attendance at funerals, but also to attend meetings of other Aboriginal organisations in which they are involved. The institution thus encourages its members, be they staff or students, to see participation in the social and cultural life of their*

community as an integral aspect of their education, not as a separate 'outside' obligation which interferes with or interrupts that education.

(FIAEP 1997b, p. 20)

Table 31: Reasons for non-attendance

Main reasons for non-attendance	Number	Per cent
Family obligations	128	33
Ill health	111	29
Bereavement	80	21
Cultural obligations	62	16
Transportation problems	44	11
Child-care problems	38	10
Financial problems	35	9
Employment workload	23	6
Community responsibilities	21	5
Not interested	19	5
Accommodation problems	18	5
Other	14	4
Drug abuse	11	3
Pregnancy	10	3
Course workload	8	2
Incarceration	3	1
Lack of English literacy	3	1
Disability	3	1

Further analysis of the data would need to be done to assess the impact, if any, such policies have on module and course completion rates.

7.2 Education outcomes

Various indicators of education outcomes are reported in table 32.

Table 33 also shows education outcomes indicators, both for Indigenous students in the VET sector and for all students in VET (Indigenous or non-Indigenous). These indicators are based on the performance of students in successfully completing (or otherwise) each module in which they enrol. However, such measures should not be confused with those used for the national reporting of VET performance (ANTA 1998) which show the hours that lead to a satisfactory completion (or otherwise) as a proportion of total hours. Thus, here we are gauging the performance of individual students, rather than reporting a measure of the effort or load taken to deliver successful outcomes.

The first of these is the crude module pass rate, which is simply the number of modules passed expressed as a proportion of the total number of module

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enrolments. Over 60 per cent of module enrolments in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges in 1997 resulted in a pass. This compares very favourably with the crude pass rate achieved by Indigenous students in all VET providers in 1997, 45 per cent. Remarkably it is also slightly higher than the national crude pass rate for all module enrolments, just under 60 per cent.

Table 32: Education outcomes

Education outcome	Per cent
Crude module pass rate	62.2
Module fail rate	3.0
Module withdrawal rate	29.5
Continuing module enrolment rate	5.3
Module pass rate	95.4
Module completion rate	65.7

Table 33: Education outcomes, the surveyed students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges, all Indigenous VET students and all VET students, 1997 (per cent)

Education outcome	Surveyed students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges	All Indigenous VET students	All VET students
Crude module pass rate	62.2	45.0	59.2
Module fail rate	3.0	14.7	10.2
Module withdrawal rate	29.5	13.8	8.8
Continuing module enrolment rate	5.3	10.6	5.0
Module pass rate	95.4	75.4	85.2
Module completion rate	65.7	72.3	82.6

Aboriginal community-controlled colleges had very low failure rates, as reflected in the low module fail rate (the number of module failures as a proportion of the total number of module enrolments). Only 3 per cent of module enrolments in the independent sector resulted in a fail, compared with almost 15 per cent of Indigenous module enrolments across the whole VET sector. The national module failure rate for all VET students was just over 10 per cent (table 33).

The corollary of this pattern is that the module withdrawal rate (the number of module enrolments resulting in a withdrawal or a withdrawal with failure as a proportion of all module enrolments) was much higher in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges, at almost 30 per cent (table 33). This contrasts with a withdrawal rate of 14 per cent for all VET Indigenous students and only 9 per cent for all VET students.

These results reflect, in part at least, the high level of student and academic support offered by Aboriginal community-controlled colleges. They also

reflect a deliberate policy of such institutions to provide counselling and alternative options to some students who are experiencing particular difficulties so that they can withdraw without failure, rather than completing the module and then failing. This policy reflects sound educational practices.

The continuing module enrolment rate (the proportion of module enrolments that were yet to be completed, and were thus continuing) among the respondents (that is, in the independent colleges) was around the national average, at just over 5 per cent, but it was about half the continuing module enrolment rate for Indigenous students in the VET sector overall (table 33).

If we net out withdrawals that did not result in a fail, a better indication of the true pass rate is obtained. The module pass rate is calculated as the sum of the number of module enrolments that were assessed and resulted in a pass, expressed as a proportion of the total of the number of module enrolments leading to a pass, the number involving assessment with a failure and the number that resulted in a withdrawal with a failure. The module pass rate in Aboriginal community colleges was a staggering 95 per cent. This was higher than the pass rate for all Indigenous students, 75 per cent, and the national rate for all students, 85 per cent (table 33).

The module completion rate (MCR) is another indicator of VET performance each year. The MCR measures the number of module enrolments that were completed, as a proportion of all module enrolments except those classified as incompletions, such as:

- no assessment, studies not yet complete
- status granted through RPL
- status granted through credit transfer
- the 'not stated' category

Specifically, the MCR is measured as the sum of the number of students who were assessed and passed and the number of students who completed class hours but were not assessed, expressed as a proportion of the total of the number of students who were assessed and passed and the number of students who completed class hours but were not assessed, plus all module enrolments that resulted in non-completions.

Non-completions include:

- students who were assessed and failed
- students who were assessed but results were withheld
- students who withdrew without failure
- students who withdrew and failed
- students who withdrew and transferred

This formula is spelt out in the NCVER *Indigenous students 1996* statistics publication (NCVER 1998, p. 21). There is a slight difference between the results reported in this publication and those obtained in this study because no provision was made in the survey that allowed us to separately identify modules completed via RPL or credit transfer. However, in a sample of this size, this should not produce major variation, and so the resultant MCR is comparable to the national figure.

As shown in table 33, some two-thirds of students enrolled in modules in the Aboriginal community-controlled colleges surveyed completed their module(s). The MCR for all Indigenous students across the entire VET system was just over 72 per cent and for all VET students in Australia it was just over 80 per cent (table 33), higher than the completion rates for students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges.

The module completion rate, although included here for national comparative purposes, is not an especially useful indicator of performance in the case of Aboriginal community-controlled colleges. As mentioned above, some categories used to calculate this rate were not collected in the survey, making it a proxy measure at best in this case. Moreover, different practices in the independent sector mean that withdrawal rates are high, failure rates and continuing enrolment rates are low, and completion without assessment is a non-existent practice (noting that elsewhere in the VET sector it is quite common). Thus the MCR provides a composite and somewhat distorting indication of performance that does not adequately reflect the sound practices of student support and counselling that occur in the independent sector.

Nevertheiess, the MCR for students in the independent sector (66%) is noteworthy, given the data presented earlier regarding previous educational qualifications, which were lower than the national average for Indigenous students in VET, and also given the material presented on language and social issues. To give an indication of the extent to which these social issues are affecting outcomes, table 34 shows the percentage of modules completed by students in each of four categories:

- those who had no history of alcohol or other abuse
- those who had previously experienced problems with alcohol abuse
- the average of all who reported some form of drug or substance abuse
- those who did not answer these questions

The table shows that 51 per cent of students who reported that they had no abuse problems completed between 76 per cent and 100 per cent of their modules, whereas only 33 per cent of students with alcohol abuse problems achieved at this level. In other words, students with these kinds of issues in their lives had lower rates of module completion.

Table 34: Module completion rates by alcohol and other drug abuse (per cent)

	Per cent modules completed			
Alcohol and other drug abuse	*25 or less*	*26–50*	*51–75*	*76–100*
No abuse	23.8	12.8	12.3	51.1
Alcohol abuse	43.4	15.8	7.9	32.9
Average all drug abuse	47.9	10.4	3.4	38.2
No answer	50.0	15.0	10.0	25.0

7.3 Employment and other positive outcomes

The good educational outcomes achieved did not necessarily translate into the kind of employment outcomes achieved by VET graduates in mainstream and largely urbanised Australia. As shown in table 35, only 12 per cent of students reported that they had obtained new paid work in the regular labour market on completion of their studies. A similar number, totalling 11 per cent of the respondents, went into work under the CDEP. A further 7 per cent of respondents retained employment or were promoted in their existing employment. Some 1 per cent were self-employed and another 6 per cent worked in an unpaid capacity in Indigenous communities or organisations. Thus some form of positive employment outcome was achieved by 36 per cent of all the students surveyed.

Table 35: Employment outcomes, broadly defined

Employment outcome	Number	Per cent
Obtained new paid job (excluding CDEP)	45	12
Worked in CDEP	42	11
Promoted /performed better in existing job	29	7
Unpaid community work	22	6
Worked in own business	3	1
Total employment outcomes	**141**	**36**

This employment outcome matches the 36 per cent employment rate (the employment:population ratio) reported by the ABS (1996) for all Indigenous Australians. The national Indigenous employment rate includes Indigenous people who live in capital cities and urban areas, where employment prospects are higher. Given that so many students graduating from the independent sector are educationally and socially disadvantaged, as well as coming from economically depressed regions, the employment outcomes achieved are noteworthy.

The employment outcome of 36 per cent among the surveyed students also compares favorably with just under 50 per cent of Indigenous graduates from TAFE overall retaining or obtaining employment following completion of their VET program, based on figures supplied by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The national employment rate for TAFE graduates exceeds 70 per cent.

Employment was not the only positive outcome achieved by students in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges. One-third of the students continued with their current studies, and a quarter undertook another course, either within the same college or at a different institution. More than a third reported that the course had made them more confident, and a significant percentage that it had strengthened their Aboriginal identity. In fact, as table 36 shows, the wide range of outcomes identified in the previous study and in consultation with the directors almost all came through in this survey.

Almost 50 per cent of the employment obtained at the end of study was in the CDEP, which is part time, while the majority of the rest was full-time work (table 37). CDEP is by definition work in Aboriginal communities, rather than for government or the private sector, suggesting once again that it is this sector which provides the bulk of employment for Aboriginal people.

Table 36: Other course outcomes

Since completing 1997 studies, student reported:	Number	Per cent
Felt more confident	141	36
Continued study	127	33
Undertook further study	92	24
Sorted out their life	82	21
Was unemployed	64	17
Looked after family and community members	63	16
Strengthened Aboriginal identity	56	14
Got a paid job	45	12
Got CDEP work	42	11
Was having a child	32	8
Did existing job better	27	7
Helped children/grandchildren with study	26	7
Did voluntary community/committee work in community	17	4
Did unpaid cultural maintenance work in community	17	4
Got a promotion	12	3
Started own business	3	1

Table 37: Type of employment obtained at the end of studying

Post-study employment	Number	Per cent
Full time	27	31
Part time	8	9
Casual	4	5
Own business	3	3
CDEP	42	48
Other/not specified	3	3
Total	**87**	**100**

This is further borne out, in the case of this study, by our analysis of the non-CDEP work obtained (table 38). In total, 70 per cent of post-study employment obtained was with Aboriginal organisations and communities.

This supports what the independent sector has long argued, namely that the work of relevance to most of its students is development work with their own people, rather than work obtained through mainstream employers such as those who dominate the Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs), and who have a major say in developing State and Territory training profiles.[20]

The high proportion of employment in CDEP is to be expected, given that in many communities and the regions of which they are a part CDEP is the only available form of employment. In the Northern Territory, which is the extreme case, CDEP accounted for 93 per cent of Indigenous job growth outside the urban centres between 1986 and 1996 (Taylor & Roach 1998). One implication is that there is a pressing need to resource the independent sector to develop further appropriate education and training for CDEP participants so that communities can use CDEP as a base from which to move to greater economic independence, as some have already done.

Table 38: Non-CDEP post-study employment obtained by employer category

Type of employer	Number	Per cent
Aboriginal organisation or community	21	47
Private enterprise	10	22
Government	10	22
Other/not specified	4	9
Total	**45**	**100**

Of the 288 students who reported having been unemployed for the two years before the study, 22 (8%) were in the group that found work other than in CDEP in the year following their course. However, this should not be seen as an indication that education and training necessarily leads directly to employment, in the normally accepted usage of this term in Australia. A larger proportion (20%) of those who had been unemployed reported they were still unemployed that year, and a small number (5) of those who had been employed previously said they were unemployed in the year following their studies.

When these results were discussed with the steering committee, the FIAEP directors argued that our definitions of employment were too narrow, and that paid full-time, part-time or CDEP work was not the only kind of work/employment that people chose. On the contrary, they said, many of the other options people nominated, as shown earlier in the other positive outcomes achieved by students (table 36), would count as legitimate 'work' in their communities. This is borne out by the fact that many of the survey respondents who chose such options as 'unpaid cultural work', 'voluntary community work' or 'looking after family' chose not to say at the same time that they were unemployed (though some did).

This goes to the heart of the question that first prompted this study, namely: What is the nature of the pathways along which students in the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector of the national VET system are travelling? Where are they coming from, what do they do in this sector, and where do they go when they leave? Are these pathways different from those

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which non-Indigenous students in the system are following, or those which Indigenous students in other parts of the system, such as the mainstream TAFE colleges, are following and, if so, why? Most importantly, what outcomes are students and their communities seeking and getting from this sector, and are they adequately recognised and valued in current policy and resourcing arrangements?

The steering committee felt that unpaid work done in Indigenous communities or organisations should count as work, on a broader definition, because such work is almost identical to the types of unpaid work that are counted as employment in the official statistics, and because it is consistent with definitions of employment as applied by the International Labor Organization (ILO), and reproduced at appendix 3. This point was also made by the ABS in their analysis of employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, which found that 27 per cent of Indigenous people were engaged in voluntary work (ABS 1996, pp. 42–44). In this analysis we have included unpaid community/cultural work in the definition of employment, noting that unpaid work done by an own-account worker or in a family business or family farm is included in the official definitions of employment in Australia. This is in spite of the fact that other forms of unpaid work are excluded from the official labour force statistics in Australia.

Table 39: Difficulties finding work

Reasons given	Number	Per cent
No jobs available	97	25
No jobs locally or in line of work	81	21
Transport problems	67	17
Child care	37	10
Ill health or disability	32	8
Insufficient education, training or skills	109	28
Racial discrimination	13	3
Other	26	7
No difficulties	168	43
No response	3	1

Some further data collected add to this picture. Quite a large proportion of respondents (43%) reported no difficulties with finding work after their course (table 39), a lot more than the number who actually went into paid employment or CDEP work. This suggests that some students were not actually looking for work as a result of having completed their studies, perhaps because they intended to study further, or perhaps because they simply had other things to do in their community. However, it is of some concern that 28 per cent reported that they still had difficulties finding work that were associated with their lack of education, suggesting that the studies they had done were insufficient to overcome this. Such respondents are most likely to have been students who had done one year of a longer course, or who had done only prevocational or basic education programs.

Of all the figures in this table, the most significant is the fact that 25 per cent of students reported that the difficulty in finding work was due to the lack of available jobs, underlining the findings of other research (see ABS 1996) that education and training of themselves are insufficient, and that overcoming Indigenous unemployment, however defined, will include a measure of job creation in the foreseeable future.

7.4 Further study, with or without work

Apart from work, paid or unpaid, the other main outcome usually identified with undertaking a VET course is moving on to further study, and certainly that was a major outcome from the sector in 1997. In terms of actual outcomes, table 40 shows large numbers of students continuing their existing studies and/or undertaking new courses. When these figures were re-analysed to remove double counting (because some chose both options), the total number of students who went on with their studies was 193, or 50 per cent of the sample. Of these, some (n = 36) were also in paid employment, but the large majority were not. Putting the paid employment (CDEP and non-CDEP) figures together with the figures for further study shows that all but 30 per cent of the sample either went into or continued in paid work, or did further study, or both (table 40).

Table 40: Work and study outcomes

Outcome	Number	Per cent
Paid work, no study	78	20
Paid work and study	36	9
Study, no paid work	157	40
Other	118	30
Total	**389**	**100**

However, the actual takeup of further study was less than it might have been, since, when asked whether they would like to do further study or training, 78 per cent of students said they would (table 41). This suggests that over 100 students from the 1997 sample were unable, for whatever reason, to pursue their studies even though that is what they wanted to do.

Table 41: Students wanting to do further study

Want to do further study?	Number	Per cent
Yes	304	78
No	85	22
Total	**389**	**100**

Some of the barriers were identified and are shown in table 42. These obstacles were obviously not insurmountable, since at least some of the students who identified one or more of them had actually continued with their courses or undertaken new ones. Nevertheless, the table provides a

useful guide for the colleges, training authorities and funding bodies as to what kinds of support might usefully be provided to assist students in this sector to remain in the VET system. The most important of these are clearly assistance and support to maintain family, community and cultural responsibilities.

Table 42: Obstacles to undertaking further study

Obstacle	Number	Per cent
Family obligations	113	29
Cultural obligations and responsibilities	76	20
Financial problems	57	15
Lack of transportation/travel	48	12
Inadequate child care available	31	8
Ill health or disability	30	8
No appropriate courses available	27	7
Employment workload	20	5
Lack of prerequisites	20	5
Lack of English proficiency	13	3
Accommodation	11	3
Community responsibilities	11	3
Moving away from home town/country	10	3
Drug abuse	4	1
Not specified	19	5
Total having some difficulty	304	78
No difficulty	85	22
Total	**389**	**100**

7.5 Student evaluations of the sector

Whatever the actual outcomes in terms of work and study, students in general evaluated their experiences in the sector positively. The majority reported that the courses they did met their personal, vocational, family and community goals (table 43), and 75 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the year had been a good one (table 44). These are both indicators of substantial achievement—given the overwhelmingly negative experience of education the majority of Aboriginal students had before coming into these colleges—and have value in themselves, in terms of improving community attitudes to education, as Schwab (1996, p. 18) argued:

> *Even when students choose not to go on to further study . . . these independent institutions are crucially important for creating a sense that education is valuable, powerful and a worthwhile investment for Indigenous people.*

Like the other, 'non-employment' outcomes for individuals discussed earlier in this report, this is currently not taken into account, in terms of policy and

funding, over and above any value ascribed to the more specific and more conventional VET system outcomes.

Table 43: Student evaluation of courses in terms of goals

Goal met	Number	Per cent
Personal needs	344	88
Vocational goals	321	83
Family expectations	260	67
Community goals	283	73

Table 44: General evaluation of the educational experience

Was 1997 a good year?	Number	Per cent
Strongly agree	206	53
Agree	87	22
Disagree	50	13
Strongly disagree	46	12
Total	**389**	**100**

8 Conclusion

This survey has helped identify the characteristics of this small but important sector of the national VET system, where significant advances are being made towards the system's overall equity objectives in relation to Indigenous people. It has also helped provide more concrete empirical information to substantiate claims made by the sector itself, and documented in previous, qualitative studies, about the special needs and aspirations of these students and the communities from which they come.

Data on the characteristics of the student population in this sector have highlighted the enormous cultural and linguistic diversity that exists, the high rate of use of Aboriginal language and non-Standard English, the low level of previous educational attainments, and the prevalence of social problems to be addressed—all things previously documented in qualitative studies and the findings of government inquiries into the sector. Among the results that might not have been predicted are the extent to which the sector is providing education and training above the preparatory level, and the very high module pass rates. Findings about pathways into employment and further study have underlined the complexity of this issue in an Indigenous community context, and provide further support for the proposition that mainstream labour market employment is not the major or even the preferred destination of the majority of students in this sector. This identifies a special role for this sector—one that deserves greater attention and support from the VET system and government—which is to provide social, educational and training support for Indigenous people's own development aspirations for their communities.

In the time available it turned out not to be possible to complete some of the more complex analysis which could have been done with the data collected. In particular, we were unable to trace any but the most basic connections between the different variables, such as the characteristics of the student population, the levels of course attempted and the outcomes. Such analysis would provide further valuable insights, and should perhaps be attempted at a later date.

Apart from the conclusions we drew from the data analysis, we also discovered a number of other things as a result of doing the survey. One of the most important discoveries was that, while colleges are collecting statistics on a regular basis for the AVETMISS national collection system, there is insufficient understanding within the sector of the purpose of this data collection and, in particular, how it might be used to promote better decision-making in the sector itself. This reflects a lack of professional

development of staff in the sector, which should be remedied. There also appears to be some scope for refining the AVETMIS Standard itself, to reflect better the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous students within the system.

An important outcome from the project was the development within the colleges themselves of a much keener sense of the value of action research of this nature. The value lies ultimately in the way such research refines the colleges' own understandings of what is happening in their sector, allowing better planning, and also providing more rigorous evidence for the propositions for which they have been arguing for some time now and for the recognition they are seeking, within the VET system and with government, for their unique role and contribution.

9 Notes

1 Historical accounts of Indigenous adult education can be found in Fletcher (1989) and Lane (1984).

2 For Tranby's early history, see Goodall (1996, pp. 306–307) and Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College (1986).

3 The work of the independent sector in this period, including the initial impact of the Aboriginal Education Policy, is discussed in McCann (1993).

4 More detailed information about the FIAEP, including its objectives, membership and current projects, can be found on its web site, at <http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/FIAEP/>.

5 Coincidentally, Paul Hughes was chair of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force in the late 1980s, which was instrumental in leading to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. See the report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (1988).

6 This account of Tauondi's history is based on Gray (1993).

7 For a discussion of some of the issues relating to research in Aboriginal communities, see Howitt et al. (1990). In the VET context, see Henry and Arnott (1998).

8 The national statistics for 1996 with which comparisons are made throughout this report are published in NCVER (1998).

9 Some colleges run cultural awareness courses for non-Indigenous students, but these are not accredited and so do not count in the national VET data. IAD runs accredited workplace trainer and assessor courses for a small number of non-Aboriginal trainers in Aboriginal organisations, but these were not surveyed.

10 In the schools sector, children from non-English speaking backgrounds attract additional funding support, but this does not seem to be the case in the VET system, at least not for Indigenous students.

11 This figure also indicates the need for vernacular speakers and interpreters to be available to work as teachers and in other roles within this sector, and in other areas of the VET system that recruit students with similar backgrounds.

12 A move within the national VET system to replace specialist curriculum with Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB)-approved training packages wherever competency standards exist has the potential to exacerbate this problem.

13 The VET policy implications for this relationship were raised by the authors of this report in a 1994 study of VET curriculum priorities (Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College 1994) and are discussed further in a recent NCVER review of research (Boughton 1998), done with assistance from the FIAEP.

14 ANTA and DETYA both named an increase in the proportion of Indigenous students in higher level courses as a major priority for the current triennium, according to papers given at the inaugural national conference of ATSIPTAC, ANTA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Training Advisory Council; for example see Buckskin (1996) and Matijevic (1996).

15 One of the participating colleges describes this trying to ensure that 'the outcomes stay in the community'. For further discussion see Boughton (1998).

16 The survey design did not include questions about the specific number of modules for which respondents had received RPL. This may have led to a slight overestimate of module completion rates, as described in section 7.2.

17 The survey also asked students 'Why did you choose to study at this college?' but the answers on the survey forms are in text form and time constraints have prevented further analysis.

18 The failure of existing national VET policy to take sufficient account of this aspect of Indigenous students' aspirations is also analysed in Boughton (1998).

19 The CDEP is a 'work for the dole' scheme whereby communities can elect to receive their entitlements to unemployment assistance in bulk, and use it to employ community members on a part-time basis.

20 These issues are discussed in detail in Boughton (1998).

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Appendices

1 VET courses and programs offered in 1997 by the FIAEP

2 Selected Australian vocational education and training statistics, Indigenous students and all students, 1997

3 Official definitions of employment, unemployment and labour force participation

4 Survey questionnaire

Appendix 1: VET courses and programs offered in 1997 by the FIAEP

Course title	College
Certificate Adult Foundation Education	Tranby
Diploma of Development Studies: Aboriginal Communities	Tranby
Diploma of National Indigenous Legal Studies	Tranby
Certificate II in Art (Foundation Studies)	Tauondi
Certificate IV in Applied and Visual Art	Tauondi
Advanced Diploma of Arts (Applied and Visual)	Tauondi
Certificate II in Aboriginal Cultural Instruction and Tour Guiding	Tauondi
Certificate III in Tourism	Tauondi
Certificate I in Office/Clerical Skills	Tauondi
Certificate II in Office/Clerical Procedures	Tauondi
Certificate III in Office/Clerical Studies	Tauondi
Certificate III in Community Services and Health	Tauondi
Certificate IV in Community Services and Health	Tauondi
Certificate I in Aboriginal Foundation Education	Tauondi
Certificate II in Aboriginal Preparatory Education	Tauondi
Certificate II in Introductory Vocational Education	Tauondi
Adult Community Education (short courses/electives)	Tauondi
Certificate in Challenges and Choices for Young Women	IAD
Diploma of Interpreting (Paraprofessional) Aboriginal Languages	IAD
Certificate III Aboriginal Cultural Studies	IAD
Certificate I Work Skills (Aboriginal Community Work)	IAD
Women's and Men's Centre Art/Craft Enterprise	IAD
Certificate II Work Skills (Aboriginal Community Work)	IAD
Certificate I and II Office Skills (Aboriginal Organisations)	IAD
Certificate II in Australian Land Management, Conservation and Restoration	IAD
Certificate I in Horticulture Skills (Aboriginal Communities)	IAD
Associate Diploma of Business (Aboriginal Organisations Management)	IAD
Certificate in Vocational Studies (Aboriginal Organisations)	IAD
Certificate I in Tourism (Site Guide)	IAD
Certificate II in Tourism (Tour Guiding)	IAD
Advanced Literacy and Vernacular Language Courses	IAD
Diploma of Interpreting (Paraprofessional): Aboriginal Languages	IAD
Course in Workplace Training (Category 1)	IAD
Workplace Assessor Training	IAD
Executive Training for Aboriginal Directors and Board Members	IAD
RPL Assessor Training	IAD
Computer Training	IAD
Bachelor of Business/Master of Education	IAD
Graduate Certificate in Management	IAD

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Course title	College
Graduate Diploma in Counselling and Human Services	IAD
Bachelor of Arts: Central Australian Indigenous Languages and Cultures	IAD
Bachelor of Management	IAD
Tertiary Preparation Course	IAD
Certificate in Dance	NAISDA
Associate Diploma in Dance	NAISDA
Diploma of Dance	NAISDA
Certificate in Primary Health Care (Environmental)	ATSICHET
Certificate in Primary Health Care (Nutrition)	ATSICHET
Certificate in Primary Health Care (General)	ATSICHET
Diploma in Primary Health Care (General)	ATSICHET
Certificate in Emotional Health and Social Wellbeing	ATSICHET
Certificate I Introduction to Dance	ADTR
Certificate II Dance Studies 1	ADTR
Certificate II Aboriginal Community Education, Health	BDC
Certificate III Community Care Nursing (AIN)	BDC
Certificate III Community Care Ancillary Services	BDC
Certificate III Community Care Services (Traineeship)	BDC
Strand A: Assistant in Nursing	
Strand B: Ancillary Services	
Certificate,III AIN Recognition Course	BDC
First Aid	BDC
WELL Program	BDC
Maths and English for Assistants in Nursing	BDC
Maths and English for Ancillary Service Workers	BDC
Train the Trainer	BDC

Key:

Tranby	Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College
Tauondi	Tauondi Inc.
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
NAISDA	National Aboriginal & Islander Skills Development Association
ADTR	Aboriginal Dance Theatre, Redfern
ATSICHET	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Corporation of Health Education & Training
BDC	Booroongen Djugun College

Appendix 2: Selected Australian vocational education and training statistics, Indigenous students and all students, 1997

Table 45: Gender (number of students)

	Indigenous students	Indigenous status not known	All students
Male	20 330	143 259	733 807
Female	18 145	130 321	676 670
Not known	53	47 117	48 123
Total	**38 528**	**320 697**	**1 458 600**

Table 46: Age

	Indigenous students		Indigenous status not known		All students	
Age	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
14 or under	532	1.4	1 104	0.3	4 918	0.3
15–19	8 501	22.1	35 699	11.1	261 306	17.9
20–24	6 869	17.8	36 006	11.2	235 851	16.2
25–29	5 540	14.4	33 239	10.4	170 023	11.7
30–39	8 063	20.9	60 823	19.0	296 331	20.3
40–49	4 402	11.4	47 715	14.9	218 716	15.0
50–59	1 597	4.1	22 980	7.2	94 891	6.5
60–64	305	0.8	4 194	1.3	16 406	1.1
65 or over	206	0.5	4 574	1.4	17 384	1.2
Not known	2 513	6.5	74 363	23.2	142 774	9.8
Total	**38 528**	**100.0**	**320 697**	**100.0**	**1 458 600**	**100.0**

Table 47: Highest year of school

	Indigenous students		Indigenous status not known		All students	
Highest year of school	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Year 9 or lower	10 197	26.5	9 318	2.9	99 680	6.8
Year 10	11 380	29.5	14 032	4.4	265 816	18.2
Year 11	3 875	10.1	7 460	2.3	145 058	9.9
Year 12	5 249	13.6	19 933	6.2	440 188	30.2
Not known	7 827	20.3	269 954	84.2	507 858	34.8
Total	**38 528**	**100.0**	**320 697**	**100.0**	**1 458 600**	**100.0**

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Table 48: Qualifications completed before 1997

	Indigenous students		Indigenous status not known		All students	
Qualification	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Trade certificate	1 430	18.8	3 704	23.8	91 627	22.3
Advanced technician certificate	346	4.6	1 089	7.0	31 190	7.6
Other certificate	3 926	51.7	5 016	32.2	133 098	32.3
Associate diploma	451	5.9	1 251	8.0	32 494	7.9
Undergraduate diploma	171	2.3	531	3.4	15 312	3.7
Degree/post-graduate diploma	451	5.9	2 415	15.5	61 406	14.9
Unspecified prior education	820	10.8	1 577	10.1	46 413	11.3
Total with prior qualification	**7 595**	**100.0**	**15 583**	**100.0**	**411 540**	**100.0**
Total in VET	**38 528**		**320 697**		**1 458 600**	

Table 49: Geographic regions

	Indigenous students		Indigenous status not known		All students	
Region	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*	*Number*	*%*
Capital city	10 647	27.6	155 645	48.5	820 526	56.3
Other metro	2 231	5.8	15 315	4.8	99 447	6.8
Rural	15 280	39.7	87 231	27.2	414 766	28.4
Remote	9 891	25.7	10 305	3.2	48 389	3.3
Outside Australia	20	0.1	1 560	0.5	16 100	1.1
Not known	459	1.2	50 641	15.8	59 372	4.1
Total	**38 528**	**100.0**	**320 697**	**100.0**	**1 458 600**	**100.0**

Table 50: Field of study

	Indigenous students						Indigenous status not known						All students					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
Field of study	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Land & marine resources, animal husbandry	2 541	10.4	719	3.3	3 263	7.0	12 012	8.0	3 960	2.9	38 128	11.4	51 570	6.4	19 162	2.6	92 906	5.8
Architecture, building	1 896	7.7	161	0.7	2 058	4.4	11 678	7.7	1 357	1.0	13 341	4.0	74 023	9.2	8 964	1.2	83 311	5.2
Art, humanities & social science	2 492	10.2	2 801	12.8	5 296	11.4	6 907	4.6	13 971	10.2	21 383	6.4	39 506	4.9	79 202	10.7	119 354	7.5
Business, administration & economics	2 067	8.4	3 954	18.0	6 037	13.0	22 416	14.8	30 304	22.1	54 974	16.4	123 387	15.3	190 081	25.8	315 963	19.8
Education	421	1.7	1 006	4.6	1 429	3.1	3 240	2.1	4 491	3.3	8 198	2.4	14 753	1.8	23 673	3.2	38 911	2.4
Engineering, surveying	3 041	12.4	488	2.2	3 532	7.6	29 866	19.8	5 293	3.9	47 041	14.0	191 920	23.8	22 570	3.1	226 392	14.2
Health, community services	1 495	6.1	2 690	12.3	4 187	9.0	9 833	6.5	15 033	11.0	25 712	7.7	41 825	5.2	91 515	12.4	134 282	8.4
Law, legal studies	89	0.4	64	0.3	153	0.3	1 420	0.9	598	0.4	2 033	0.6	5 063	0.6	3 953	0.5	9031	0.6
Science	585	2.4	502	2.3	1 087	2.3	11 385	7.5	15 698	11.4	27 660	8.2	51 319	6.4	64 522	8.7	116 567	7.3
Veterinary science, animal care	7	0.0	14	0.1	21	0.0	46	0.0	358	0.3	404	0.1	256	0.0	2 300	0.3	2 556	0.2
Services, hospitality, transportation	1 416	5.8	2 027	9.2	3 445	7.4	12 646	8.4	12 733	9.3	26 974	8.0	84 304	10.5	81 676	11.1	167 627	10.5
TAFE multi-field education	8 449	34.5	7 531	34.3	16 005	34.4	29 596	19.6	33 389	24.3	69 544	20.7	129 066	16.0	150 145	20.4	286 023	18.0
Total	**24 499**	**100.0**	**21 957**	**100.0**	**46 513**	**100.0**	**151 045**	**100.0**	**137 185**	**100.0**	**335 392**	**100.0**	**806 992**	**100.0**	**737 763**	**100.0**	**1 592 923**	**100.0**

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Table 51: Qualification category

	Indigenous students						Indigenous status not known						All students					
	Male enrolments		Female enrolments		Total enrolments		Male enrolments		Female enrolments		Total enrolments		Male enrolments		Female enrolments		Total enrolments	
	No.	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%	*No.*	%
Diploma & higher degree	1 214	4.2	1 650	6.3	2 865	5.2	12 036	7.1	11 391	7.1	23 436	6.2	102 900	11.1	107 683	12.4	210 601	11.4
AQF Certificate IV and equivalent	1 334	4.6	1 670	6.4	3 004	5.5	13 147	7.8	11 011	6.9	24 202	6.4	84 853	9.2	77 354	8.9	162 270	8.8
AQF Certificate III & equivalent	2 991	10.4	2 990	11.4	5 982	10.9	21 809	12.9	15 321	9.5	37 283	9.9	151 891	16.4	107 826	12.4	259 916	14.1
Certificate, not elsewhere classified	6 077	21.2	5 672	21.7	11 752	21.4	15 167	9.0	14 069	8.8	29 401	7.8	86 290	9.3	85 048	9.8	171 544	9.3
AQF Certificate I, II & senior secondary	8 125	28.3	7 109	27.2	15 238	27.7	19 307	11.4	17 946	11.2	40 086	10.6	118 894	12.9	126 573	14.5	248 491	13.5
Other	8 982	31.3	7 049	27.0	16 087	29.3	87 487	51.8	90 709	56.5	223 183	59.1	378 668	41.0	366 831	42.1	791 406	42.9
Total	**28 723**	**100.0**	**26 140**	**100.0**	**54 928**	**100.0**	**168 954**	**100.0**	**160 447**	**100.0**	**377 592**	**100.0**	**923 499**	**100.0**	**871 322**	**100.0**	**1 844 238**	**100.0**

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Appendix 3: Official definitions of employment, unemployment and labour force participation

ILO definition of the employed, unemployed and economically inactive populations: A summary of international statistical definitions

The *employed population* covers all persons engaged in the production of goods and services, even if for only one hour, during a specified short reference period, and all persons who have a job from which they are absent but in which they normally work. It is an extensive concept which encompasses all types of employment situations, including casual labour, short-time work and all forms of irregular employment.

The *unemployed population* covers all persons who are not in employment, but who are available and seeking work. Under certain circumstances, the unemployed population may include workers who do not seek work—a 'relaxed' definition of unemployment. The measure indicates the extent to which an economy fails to provide jobs for its workforce.

The *economically inactive population* is a residual category, comprising persons who are neither employed nor unemployed. It encompasses all persons who because of physical handicaps are not able to work, and all persons who, for personal reasons such as studies, family responsibilities or old age, are not willing to work. In order to reduce the cost of collecting the information, it also includes persons below a certain age, defined at the national level, regardless of whether they work or are looking for work. The age below which persons are considered inactive is generally chosen to cover those age groups that generally do not participate in economic activity; for example, persons below the compulsory schooling age or the minimum working age established in legislation.

Source: ILO 1988, Current international recommendations on labour statistics, 1988 edition, ILO, Geneva.

Glossary of labour force definitions used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Actively looking for work	Includes writing, telephoning or applying in person to an employer for work; answering an advertisement for a job; checking factory notice boards or the touchscreens at CentreLink offices; being registered with CentreLink as a jobseeker; checking or registering with any other employment agency; advertising or tendering for work; and contacting friends or relatives.
Aggregate hours worked	The total number of hours a group of employed persons has actually worked during the reference week, not necessarily hours paid for.
Attending school	Persons aged 15–19 who, during the reference week, were enrolled full time at a secondary or high school.

Attending tertiary educational institution full-time

Persons aged 15–24 who, during the reference week, were enrolled full time at a TAFE college, university or other tertiary educational institution.

Average duration of unemployment

For a group of unemployed persons, the aggregate duration of unemployment divided by the number of persons in the group.

Average hours worked

Aggregate hours worked by a group divided by the number of persons in that group.

Contributing family worker

A person who works without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative. (This category was formerly titled 'Unpaid family helper'.)

Duration of unemployment

The period from the time a person began looking for work or was stood down, to the end of the reference week. Thus the survey measures current (and continuing) periods of unemployment rather than completed spells. For persons who may have begun looking for work while still employed, the duration of unemployment is defined as the period from the time the person last worked full time for two weeks or more to the end of the reference week.

Employed

Persons aged 15 and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind in a job or business, or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own-account workers); or
- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (that is, contributing family workers); or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were: on paid leave; on leave without pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; stood down without pay because of bad weather or plant breakdown at their place of employment for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; on strike or locked out; on workers' compensation and expected to be returning to their job; receiving wages or salary while undertaking full-time study; or
- were employers, own-account workers or contributing family workers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work

Employee	A person who works for a public or private employer and receives remuneration in wages, salary, a retainer fee from their employer while working on a commission basis, tips, piece rates or payment in kind, or a person who operates their own incorporated enterprise with or without hiring employees.
Employer	A person who operates their own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires one or more employees.
Employment/population ratio	For any group, the number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 and over in the same group.
Former workers	Unemployed persons who have previously worked full time for two weeks or more but not in the past two years.
Full-time workers	Employed persons who usually worked 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and others who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week.
Labour force	For any group, persons who were employed or unemployed, as defined.
Labour force status	A classification of the civilian population aged 15 and over into employed, unemployed or not in the labour force, as defined. The definitions conform closely to the international standard definitions adopted by the International Conferences of Labour Statisticians.
Long-term unemployed	Persons unemployed for a period of 52 weeks or more.
Not in the labour force	Persons who were not in the categories employed and unemployed, as defined. They include persons who were keeping house (unpaid), retired, voluntarily inactive, permanently unable to work, in institutions (hospitals, gaols, sanatoriums etc.), trainee teachers, members of contemplative religious orders, and those whose only activity during the reference week was jury service or unpaid voluntary work for a charitable organisation.

Own-account worker	A person who operates their own unincorporated economic enterprise or engages independently in a profession or trade, and hires no employees (this category was formerly titled 'Self-employed').
Participation rate	For any group, the labour force expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 and over in the same group. Participation rates for persons classified by birthplace are calculated using population estimates that exclude those in institutions. Participation rates for persons classified by school or tertiary educational institution attendance are calculated using population estimates that include those in institutions.
Part-time workers	Employed persons who usually worked less than 35 hours a week and who did so during the reference week.
Status in employment	Employed persons classified by whether they were employers, own-account workers, employees or contributing family workers.
Unemployed	Persons aged 15 and over who were not employed during the reference week, and: ❖ had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week; and ❖ were available for work in the reference week, or would have been available except for temporary illness (that is, lasting for less than four weeks to the end of the reference week); or ❖ were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and would have started in the reference week if the job had been available then; or ❖ were waiting to be called back to a full-time or part-time job from which they had been stood down without pay for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week (including the whole of the reference week) for reasons other than bad weather or plant breakdown
Unemployed looking for full-time work	Unemployed persons who actively looked for full-time work or were to resume a full-time job from which they had been stood down.

Unemployed looking for part-time work	Unemployed persons who had actively looked for part-time work only or were to resume a part-time job from which they had been stood down.
Unemployment rate	For any group, the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force in the same group.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998, *Labour force Australia, August 1998*, cat. no. 6203.0, ABS, Canberra.

Appendix 4: Survey questionnaire

Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers Ltd

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

TRACKING STUDENTS ENROLLED IN 1997 VET COURSES AT FOUR FIAEP COLLEGES

I agree to participate in this research project on the understanding that this survey form (unit record data) will be destroyed at the end of the project and at no stage will my identity be revealed. I also understand that the data collected will be used to produce a report for publication.

Student signature _____

Director signature _____

STUDENT ID: _ _ _ - _ _ _ e.g.

IAD 001 - 199
NAI 200 - 299
TAU 300 - 499
TRA 500 - 599

COLLECTOR CODE: _ _ *(your initials)*

DATE: _ _/_ _/_ _ (e.g. 07/05/98)

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART A
SECTION 1 - STUDENT PROFILE

1. CHARACTERISTICS

1.1 What is your date of birth and age?

Date of birth: __ __ / __ __ / 19__ __
(Day) (Month) (Year)

Age: __ __
(Years)

1.2 Sex: __ M __ F

1.3 Do you identify with a clan, tribal or language group? *(please tick one)*

Yes __ 1 → **1.3.1** Name of clan, tribe or language group? E.g. Arremte.
_____
_____

No __ 2

Don't Know __ 3 → **1.3.2** Do you identify with an area/ place/community? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes __ 1

No __ 2

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1.4 Do you recognise an area as your homelands/traditional country? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

1.4.1 Are your homelands/traditional country important or not important to you? *(please tick one)*

Important ___ 1

Not Important ___ 2

Don't Know ___ 3

1.4.2 Is it where your ancestors came from? *(please tick one)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

Don't Know ___ 3

1.4.3 Is it where you grew up? *(please tick one)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

For some time ___ 3

1.4.4 Is it where you live now? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

1.4.5 Are your homelands/traditional country a town or city? *(please tick one)*

Yes, a town or city ___ 1

No, not a town or city ___ 2

1.5 Do you speak English? *(please tick one)*

Yes ___ 1

Yes, some words only ___ 2

No ___ 3

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1.6 Do you speak Broken English, Aboriginal English, pidgin English or Creole? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Yes ___ 1 →

Yes, some words only ___ 2

No ___ 3

1.6.1 Which one do you speak?

_____

_____

1.7 Do you speak any Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander languages? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Yes ___ 1 →

Yes, some words only ___ 2

No ___ 3

1.7.1 How many? *(tick one only)*

Speak **more** than one language __ 1

Speak one language only __ 2

1.7.2 Name of language(s) spoken.

Aboriginal Language 1 _____

Aboriginal Language 2 _____

Aboriginal Language 3 _____

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1.8 What is the main language you speak at home?
(please tick one only)

English	___ 1
Broken English, Aboriginal English, Pidgin English, Creole	___ 2
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander language	___ 3
Other language	___ 4

1.8.1 Please name the language:
_____

1.9 When you go to a service or office where only English is spoken, do you have difficulty… *(please tick yes or no)*

	Yes	No
understanding people?	___	___ 1
being understood?	___	___ 2
Neither	___	___ 3

1.9.1 Would you use an Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander interpreter to help you at these places?
(please tick yes or no)

Yes	___ 1
No	___ 2

1.10 **In 1997** were you… *(please tick one only)*

Single	___ 1
Married/De Facto	___ 2

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1.11 In 1997 did you have the care of any children? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

1.11.1 In 1997, how many children did you have in your care ?

Number ____

This question is about forced separation of children from their families.

Please ask the student to indicate if they do not want to answer this question.

1.12 Did you grow up in an Aboriginal community? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

1.13 Were you taken away from your natural family? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

Do not want to answer ___ 3

1.13.1 During that time you were taken away, who brought you up? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Related Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people ___ 1

Unrelated Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people ___ 2

Non-Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander adoptive or foster parent(s) ___ 3

Orphanage/children's home ___ 4

Mission ___ 5

Other *(specify)* _____ 6

1.13.2 Were either of your parents taken away? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

I don't know ___ 3

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This question is about contact with police.
Please ask the student to indicate if they do not want to answer the question.

1.14 In the **five years before you enrolled in 1997**, were you ever arrested by the police? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1
No ___ 2
Do not want to answer ___ 3

1.14.1 How many times:

Number of times _____

1.14.2 **In 1997**, were you arrested by the police? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1
No ___ 2

1.15 Have you ever been in custody? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1
No ___ 2
Do not want to answer ___ 3

1.15.1 How many times?
_____ *(number)*

1.15.2 What was the longest length of time you spent in custody?
____ years ____ months 1

Don't know ___ 2
Do not want to answer ___ 3

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The next few questions relate to personal safety.
Please ask the student to indicate if they do not want to answer this question.

1.16 **In 1997** did anyone attack or verbally threaten you? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

No not want to answer ___ 3

1.16.1 How many times?

Number of times ___ 1

1.16.2 In how many of these were you physically attacked?

None ___ 1

Number of physical attacks ___ 2

1.16.3 Were you physically attacked in the last incident? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

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The next few questions relate to health issues.
Please ask the student to indicate if they do not want to answer the following questions.

1.17 In the five years before you enrolled **in 1997**, did you ever have a substance abuse problem with any of the following. *(please tick yes or no)*

	Yes	No	
Alcohol?	___	___	1
Smoking?	___	___	2
Marijuana?	___	___	3
Other drugs?	___	___	4
Petrol sniffing?	___	___	5
Glue sniffing?	___	___	6
Other dangerous substances like paint stripper or metho?	___	___	7
Do not want to answer.	___	___	8

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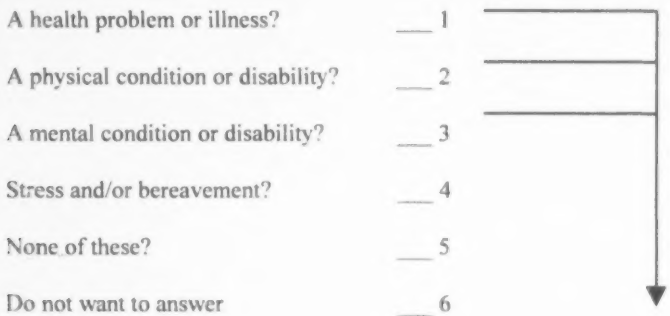
1.18 In **1997** did you suffer any of the following conditions or disabilities? *(tick all that apply)*



A health problem or illness?	___ 1
A physical condition or disability?	___ 2
A mental condition or disability?	___ 3
Stress and/or bereavement?	___ 4
None of these?	___ 5
Do not want to answer	___ 6

1.18.1 Did any of these conditions or disabilities last for 6 months? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes	___ 1
No	___ 2

1.18.2 Because of any of these conditions or disabilities, did you need to get help with… *(tick all that apply)*

Moving around at home or outside?	___ 1
Daily activities like bathing, dressing, eating or using the toilet?	___ 2
Talking with others and understanding others?	___ 3
None of these	___ 4

1.18.3 Who, if anyone, usually helped you? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

No-one	___ 1
Family	___ 2
Friends	___ 3
Other (specify)	___ 4

_____

_____

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART A
SECTION 2 - EDUCATION PROFILE

2.1. SCHOOL EDUCATION

2.1.1 At what age did you leave primary or secondary school? *(tick one only)*

14 years or younger	___ 1
15 years	___ 2
16 years	___ 3
17 years	___ 4
18 years	___ 5
19 years or older	___ 6

2.1.2 What was the highest year of school **completed**? *(please tick one only)*

Primary school	___ 1
year 7	___ 2
year 8	___ 3
year 9	___ 4
year 10	___ 5
year 11	___ 6
year 12	___ 7

2.1.3 What year did you complete that school level?

Year _____ 1

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2.2 POST SCHOOL EDUCATION

2.2.1 **Before 1997** have you **completed** any qualifications?
(please tick yes or no)

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

2.2.1.1 How many courses have you successfully completed?

Number of courses _____

FOR EACH COURSE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

COURSE 1	COURSE 2	COURSE 3

2.2.1.2 What is the full name of the course? (e.g. Trade Certificate in Carpentry, Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Arts)

2.2.1.3 What was the course about?

2.2.1.4 What is the full name of the institution that provided the course?

2.2.1.5 How long does the course usually take to complete?

years ___ **months** ___	**years**___ **months** ___	**years**___ **months** ___

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2.2.1.6 Was that as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes _ 1 No _ 2	Yes _ 1 No _ 2	Yes _ 1 No _ 2

2.2.1.7 When did you complete the course?

Year 19 _ _	Year 19 _ _	Year 19 _ _

2.2.1.8 Have you used the skills and information you gained from the courses: *(tick all that apply)*

to help you get a job	___ 1	to learn new knowledge/skills	___ 9
to get a better job	___ 2	for personal interest	___ 10
for promotion within your current job	___ 3	to gain confidence	___ 11
to get extra skills for your job	___ 4	to work for Aboriginal Organisations	___ 12
to change your career	___ 5	to strengthen your Aboriginal identity	___ 13
to work for your community	___ 6	to help your children/grandchildren with school work	___ 14
to allow you to do further study	___ 7	to meet community goals	___ 15
to improve your English literacy & numeric skills	___ 8	to overcome personal difficulties	___ 16
other *(please specify)* _____			17

2.2.2 What was the highest post-school formal qualification you completed **prior to 1997**? *(please tick one only)*

Trade Certificate	___ 1
Advanced/Technician Certificate	___ 2
Certificate other than above	___ 3
Associate Diploma	___ 4
Advanced Diploma	___ 5
Degree	___ 6
Postgraduate	___ 7
Other *(specify)*	___ 8

_____

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2.2.3 **Prior to 1997** have you ever started any qualifications or courses that you did not complete? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

2.2.3.1 What were the main reasons you did not complete the course?
(please tick all that apply)

Cultural obligations and responsibilities	___ 1
Community responsibilities	___ 2
Family obligations	___ 3
No child care available	___ 4
Bereavement	___ 5
Lack of transport/travel	___ 6
Financial problems	___ 7
Got a job	___ 8
Lack of English proficiency	___ 9
Achieve what I wanted	___ 10
Course too difficult	___ 11
Pregnancy	___ 12
Own ill health	___ 13
Drug abuse disability	___ 14
Incarceration	___ 15
Lost interest	___ 16
Racism	___ 17
Other *(specify)*	___ 18
_____	
_____	
No reason	___ 19

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART A
SECTION 3 - EMPLOYMENT PROFILE 1994 - 1996

3.1 Between 1994 to 1996 were you ever in paid employment? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

3.1.1 For each paid job you worked, provide the following details

QUESTION	JOB #1	JOB #2	JOB #3	JOB #4
FULL TIME OR PART TIME				
JOB OR OCCUPATION *E.G. RANGER, HEALTH WORKER*				
EMPLOYER'S NAME				
EMPLOYMENT CATAGORY *(please tick one)*				
Aboriginal organisation or community				
Private enterprise				
Government:	*(tick one)*	*(tick one)*	*(tick one)*	*(tick one)*
Commonwealth	_____ 1	_____ 1	_____ 1	_____ 1
State/Territory	_____ 2	_____ 2	_____ 2	_____ 2
Local	_____ 3	_____ 3	_____ 3	_____ 3
Group training scheme	_____ 4	_____ 4	_____ 4	_____ 4
Self employed				
Other *(please specify)*				
LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT *(number of years/months)*	_____ years _____ months	_____ years _____ months	_____ years _____ months	_____ years _____ months

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART B
1997 COURSE PROFILE

1. What course did you study in 1997?

_____

2. How long was the course?

_____

3. Was this course part of a traineeship or apprenticeship? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

4. What was the course about?

_____

_____

_____

5. How was it delivered? *(please tick all that apply)*

Block release ___ 1

Local class ___ 2

Remote class ___ 3

Self paced ___ 4

External ___ 5

Workplace ___ 6

Mixed delivery ___ 7

Other *(please specify)* ___ 8

_____

_____

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6. Where was it delivered? *(please tick all that apply)*

Main college	___ 1
Local community	___ 2
Workplace	___ 3
Outstation/homeland	___ 4
Town camp	___ 5
Other (specify)	___ 6

_____

_____

7. Did your course include… *(please tick all that apply)*

On the job training	Yes ___ 1	No ___ 4
Work experience	Yes ___ 2	No ___ 5
Community/work placement	Yes ___ 3	No ___ 6

8. Did your course include field trip(s) or excursions?
(please tick yes or no)

Yes ___ 1 No ___ 2

↓

9.1 Was it…
(please tick all that apply)

Local?	Yes ___ 1	No ___ 6
Regional?	Yes ___ 2	No ___ 7
State?	Yes ___ 3	No ___ 8
Interstate?	Yes ___ 4	No ___ 9
International?	Yes ___ 5	No ___ 10

9. Did you have any choice about the modules (subjects) you did as part of your course? (i.e. were there electives as well as core /compulsory modules?)

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

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10. What entry requirements did you have to meet to do this course?
(please tick all that apply)

English language literacy	___ 1	Year 12	___ 5
Numeric	___ 2	Mature Age	___ 6
Year 10	___ 3	None	___ 7
Other *(please specify)* _____	___ 4		

11. What other selection criteria did you have to meet to do this course?
(please tick all that apply)

Apprenticeship	___ 1
Traineeship	___ 2
Aboriginal organisation sponsorship	___ 3
Aboriginal community sponsorship	___ 4
Employer sponsorship	___ 5
Other (please specify) _____	___ 6
None	___ 7

12. Did you get Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for any part of your course because of previous study, work or life experiences? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes	___ 1
No	___ 2

Please read each of these statements and give them a score out of 4. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle the number 4. If you strongly disagree with the statement, circle the number 1. If you somewhat disagree, circle the number 2 and if you somewhat agree circle the number 3.

13. Most of the work in this course was too easy. *(please circle one number)*

1 2 3 4
strongly disagree **strongly agree**

14. Most of the work in this course was too difficult. *(please circle one number)*

1 2 3 4
strongly disagree **strongly agree**

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15. The college offered the right course for you. *(please circle one number)*

1	2	3	4
strongly disagree			**strongly agree**

16. What did you dislike about your course?

_____
_____
_____
_____

17. What did you like about your course?

_____
_____
_____
_____

18. How did you find out about the course you did? *(please tick one only)*

From college newspaper, posters, videos	___ 1
It was suggested to you by your employer	___ 2
I had known about it for a long time	___ 3
Family members/ friends	___ 4
Work mates	___ 5
DEETYA/TSS/CES	___ 6
Community members	___ 7
School	___ 8
Other *(specify)* _____	9

19. Why did you choose to do this course? *(Tick all that apply)*

To help you get a job	___ 1	To learn new knowledge/skills	___ 9
To get a better job	___ 2	For personal interest	___ 10
For promotion within your current job	___ 3	To gain confidence	___ 11
To get extra skills for your job	___ 4	To work for Aboriginal organisations	___ 12
To change your career	___ 5	To strengthen your Aboriginal identity	___ 13
To work for your community	___ 6	To help your children/ grandchildren with school work	___ 14
To overcome personal difficulties	___ 7		
To allow you to do further study	___ 8	To meet Community goals	___ 15

Other *(please specify)* _____ 16

20. Did you receive extra help with English literacy skills (reading and writing) needed for your course? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

21. Were your teachers available and supportive of your learning needs? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

22. Did you receive enough help with learning how to study or how to return to learning? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

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23. Did your teachers include non-Aboriginal people? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

23.1 How many of each? *(please give numbers)*

Aboriginal ___ 1

Non-Aboriginal ___ 2

24. Did your course include an Aboriginal mentor? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

25. How often were Aboriginal people included as guest lecturers/speakers? *(please tick one only)*

Often ___ 1 Sometimes ___ 2 Rarely ___ 3

26. Did you have help with your course from an ATAS/ABSTUDY tutor? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART C
1997 STUDENT PROGRESS & COLLEGE SUPPORT

1. How many years were you a student at this college? _____years

2. Please answer the following questions. **In 1997 ....** *(please give numbers)*

   2.1 how many modules were in your course? _____

   2.2 how many modules did you complete? _____

   2.3 how many modules did you withdraw from? _____

   2.4 how many modules did you fail? _____

   2.5 how many modules are you continuing? _____

3. Please answer the following questions. **In 1997 ...**

   3.1 your yearly attendance record was... *(tick one only)*

Less than 50%	___ 1
Between 50% - 80%	___ 2
Between 80% - 100%	___ 3

   3.2 The main reason(s) for your non attendance was...
   (please tick all that apply)

Family obligations	___ 1	Incarceration	___ 10
Child care problems	___ 2	Community responsibilities	___ 11
Transportation problems	___ 3	Employment work load	___ 12
Accommodation problems	___ 4	Lack of English literacy proficiency	___ 13
Cultural obligations & responsibilities	___ 5	Course workload	___ 14
Bereavement	___ 6	Disinterested	___ 15
Ill health	___ 7	Financial problems	___ 16
Pregnancy	___ 8	Disability	___ 17
Drug abuse	___ 9	Other (please specify) _____	___ 18

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4. This college is located... *(please tick one only)*

Within home city/town ___ 1

Within home State/Territory ___ 2

Interstate from home/community ___ 3

4.1 Living away from your home community in 1997 was... *(please tick one only)*

Easy ___ 1

Somewhat easy ___ 2

Somewhat difficult ___ 3

Difficult ___ 4

5. Which of the following support services were provided to you by your college or your college assisted you to access appropriate services? *(please tick all that apply)*

Assistance with meeting family and community obligations and responsibilities ___ 1

Assistance with meeting cultural obligations and responsibilities ___ 2

Abstudy assistance ___ 3

Accommodation assistance ___ 4

Transportation to and from courses and related activities ___ 5

Child care assistance ___ 6

Health services, including treatment for drug and alcohol abuse ___ 7

Counselling services ___ 8

Nutrition service ___ 9

Assistance with budgeting and banking ___ 10

After hours facilities for personal study (including libraries, study labs, quiet areas and computers) ___ 11

Other *(please specify)* _____ 12

_____

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Please rate the following questions from 1 to 4. **1 = Very important, 2 = Somewhat important, 3 = Not that important and 4 = not important at all.**

6. How important were the following services to your academic progress and confidence building?

		1	2	3	4	N/A
6.1	Assistance with meeting family and community obligations and responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.2	Assistance with meeting cultural obligations and responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.3	Abstudy assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.4	Accommodation assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.5	Transportation to and from courses and related activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.6	Child care assistance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.7	Health services, including treatment for drug and alcohol abuse	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.8	Counselling services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.9	Nutrition service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.10	Assistance with budgeting and banking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.11	After hours facilities for personal study (including libraries, study labs, quiet areas and computers)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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7. Did you receive training in preparing for work, e.g. job applications, preparing a resume, interview techniques or references? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

Did not need it ___ 3

8. Did you receive adequate career advice regarding further study, course choices, work placement and or job opportunities? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

Did not need it ___ 3

9. Did you receive useful assistance with getting employment? *(please tick one only)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

Did not need it ___ 3

Read each of these statements and give them a score out of 4. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle 4. If you strongly disagree with the statement circle 1. If you somewhat disagree circle 2 and if you somewhat agree circle 3.

10. The college demonstrated an understanding and awareness of and sensitivity towards your cultural obligations, responsibilities and associated protocols. *(please circle one only)*

1 2 3 4
strongly agree **strongly disagree**

11. The library had everything you needed. *(please circle one only)*

1 2 3 4
strongly disagree **strongly agree**

12. The equipment you used was up to date. *(please circle one only)*

1 2 3 4
strongly disagree **strongly agree**

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13. The facilities where you were taught were comfortable (cooling, lighting etc.).
(please circle one only)

1 2 3 4
strongly disagree **strongly agree**

14. Why did you choose to study at this college?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

The next few questions are about how you supported yourself while studying in 1997. ***Please ask the student to indicate if they do not want to answer this question.***

15. How did you support yourself while studying **in 1997**?

15.1 Did you have a paid job? Yes ___ 1 No ___ 2

↓

15.1.1 Part-time ___ 1 Full-time ___ 2

15.1.2 Who was your employer?
(please indicate)

Aboriginal organisation/ community yes ___ 1 no ___ 2

Government department agency yes ___ 1 no ___ 2

↓

15.1.2.1
Commonwealth ___ 1
State/Territory ___ 2
Local ___ 3

Private Enterprise yes ___ 1 no ___ 2

Self employed yes ___ 1 no ___ 2

Other (please specify) _____ 3

15.1.3 What was your job title/occupation?

_____

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15.2 Did you receive any Government payments in 1997? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

15.2.1 What form of Government Payment? *(please tick <u>one</u> only)*

Abstudy	___ 1
Supporting parents	___ 2
Scholarship	___ 3
Age pension	___ 4
Unemployment	___ 5
CDEP	___ 6
Disability Support Pension	___ 7
Sickness Allowance	___ 8
Other *(please specify)*: _____	___ 9

15.3 Did your parents support you? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1 No ___ 2

16. Were you sponsored to do your course **in 1997**? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

29.1 By an Aboriginal Organisation/ Aboriginal community Yes __ 1 No __ 2

By a government department/ agency *(please indicate)* Yes __ 1 No __ 2

29.1.1

Commonwealth	___ 1
State/Territory	___ 2
Local	___ 3

By a private employer Yes __ 1 No __ 2

Other *(please specify)* _____

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VET PATHWAYS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

PART D
1998: OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

1. What have you done in 1998 since completing your course?
(please tick the answers that apply)

Got a paid job	___ 1
Got a promotion	___ 2
Do your existing job better	___ 3
Started your own business	___ 4
CDEP work	___ 5
Unemployed	___ 6
Continued study	___ 7
Further study	___ 8
Returned to your community to unpaid voluntary community/ committee work	___ 9
Returned to your community to do unpaid cultural maintenance and responsibility work	___ 10
Strengthened your Aboriginal identity	___ 11
Having a child	___ 12
Help your children/grandchildren with their study	___ 13
Look after your family and community members	___ 14
Feel more confident	___ 15
Sorted out your life	___ 16

1.1 If you got a job, is the job...

Full-time	___ 1
Part-time	___ 2
Casual	___ 3
Contract	___ 4

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1.2 Where did you get the job? *(please tick one)*

An Aboriginal organisation community ___ 1

Private enterprise ___ 2

Government sector *(please indicate)* ___ 3

1.2.1 **Commonwealth** ___ 1

State/Territory ___ 2

Local ___ 3

Other *(please specify)* ___ 4

Self-employed ___ 5

1.3 What type of job/occupation?

_____

1.4 In your main job how much do you usually earn (before tax and other deductions)?

$ _____

1.4.1 What period does this amount cover?

Annual ___ 1
Fortnightly ___ 2
Weekly ___ 3
Other *(specify)* _____ 4

2. How has doing your course in 1997 changed or improved your life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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3. What are all the difficulties, if any, you have with getting a job?
(please tick all that apply)

No jobs available	___ 1
No jobs in local area or line of work	___ 2
Transportation problems	___ 3
Child care	___ 4
Own ill health or disability	___ 5
Insufficient education, training, skills	___ 6
Racial discrimination	___ 7
Other difficulties *(please specify)*	___ 8

_____

No difficulties	___ 9

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4. Do you want to do any further study or training? *(please tick yes or no)*

Yes ___ 1

No ___ 2

4.1 What is the main difficulty you would have in getting further study or training? *(please tick all that apply)*

Family obligations	___ 1
Cultural obligations and responsibilities	___ 2
Inadequate child care available	___ 3
Financial problems	___ 4
Accommodation	___ 5
Lack of transportation/travel	___ 6
Community responsibilities	___ 7
Ill health disability	___ 8
Drug abuse	___ 9
Lack of English proficiency	___ 10
Employment workload	___ 11
Lack of pre-requisites	___ 12
No appropriate courses available	___ 13
Moving away from home town/country	___ 14
Other *(please specify)*	___ 15
_____	
No difficulty	___ 16

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5. Did your **1997** course meet your... *(tick yes or no)*

Personal needs	Yes	___ 1	No	___ 5
Vocational goals	Yes	___ 2	No	___ 6
Family expectations	Yes	___ 3	No	___ 7
Community goals	Yes	___ 4	No	___ 8

6. On reflection, 1997 was a good year for you? *(please circle one only)*

1 2 3 4
strongly agree **strongly disagree**

7. What do you want to achieve this year and next year?

_____

_____

_____

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NCVER undertakes and manages research programs and monitors the performance of Australia's training system.

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